BERWICK-UPON-TWEED
TOWN COUNCIL

Full Council

Time and date
Monday 28 September 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
14 January 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
In accordance with the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, meetings which are open to the public may be recorded or otherwise reported. This meeting will be digitally recorded by the Town Council. The recording will be retained until the minutes have been formally approved and signed, after which it will be deleted in accordance with the Council's retention arrangements. Recording will cease during any part of the meeting from which the press and public have been formally excluded.

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.

BERWICK-UPON-TWEED TOWN COUNCIL

2026-09-28 18:00 - 20:00

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AGENDA

49.26.Members of the Council

Members of the Council: Cllr Jane Turton (Mayor), Cllr Rosemary Mackenzie (Deputy Mayor) Cllr Janice Bowden, Cllr Graham Brown, Cllr Rachel Driver, Cllr Mike Greener, Cllr Laura Hawken, Cllr Paul Hillier, Cllr Ayrin Khan, Cllr John Robertson, Cllr Catherine Seymour, Cllr Gary Smith and Cllr Thomas Stewart

50.26.Newly Elected Councillor

To welcome the newly elected Councillor to Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council following the election held on 24 September 2026 and to note the completion of the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.
Under section 83(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, a parish/town councillor must make their Declaration of Acceptance of Office before or at the first meeting after their election, unless the Council at that meeting permits it to be made at a later meeting.

51.26.Apologies for Absence

To receive apologies for absence and, in accordance with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972, to consider and approve the reasons given for absence.

52.26.Disclosure of Interests

To receive declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and/or other interests in respect of any item on the agenda, in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 and the Council's Code of Conduct, and to consider any requests for dispensations. Members are requested to complete the attached Declaration of Interests form where applicable.

53.26.Open Session

To provide an opportunity for members of the public to make representations, ask questions or give evidence in respect of business on the agenda. The period for public participation shall not exceed 15 minutes in total, with each person permitted to speak for a maximum of 3 minutes, in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders.

54.26.Minutes

To sign as a correct record the minutes of the Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council meeting held on 27th July 2026.

55.26.Part 1- Items for Decisions

Working Group Updates and Recommendations
To receive and review the notes of the Council's Working Groups and to consider any recommendations requiring a decision by Full Council.

56.26.Notes of the Environment and Communities Group

To consider the recommendations arising from the Environment and Communities Working Group meeting held on 9 September 2026. Full notes of the meeting are included within the agenda pack.
Recommendations:

1. Market and Town Centre Improvement Expenditure – That Full Council notes the current position on market and town centre improvement expenditure, including that a detailed breakdown will be considered through the Budget and Administration Working Group and that the market budget structure will be presented more clearly in the next financial year.
2. Biodiversity and Sustainability – That Full Council endorses the updated Biodiversity and Sustainability report as referred by the Environment and Communities Working Group, noting the Working Group's view that green-roof bus shelters should not be progressed as a spending priority.
3. Operations Manager Update – That Full Council notes the Operations Manager update and the follow-up actions agreed by the Working Group.
4. Pump Track – That Full Council reaffirms its support in principle for a pump track in Berwick and supports continued feasibility discussions with Berwick Youth Project, without any further financial commitment at this stage, with a substantive proposal to be brought back when a viable route forward has been identified.
5. Tide Time Books – That Full Council supports the continued production of Tide Time Books in principle and asks officers to confirm the proposed print quantity, final cost and any available external support before printing is commissioned.
6. Tweedmouth Planters – That Full Council approves the purchase of three rectangular timber planters for Tweedmouth Main Street at an indicative cost of £4,418.87 including delivery, subject to final confirmation of land ownership and positioning.
7. Shop Front Vinyls – That Full Council notes the exploratory work on possible additional shop-front vinyls and that no expenditure will be committed until the necessary permissions, occupancy position and detailed costs have been established.
8. Newfields Play Park Resurfacing – That Full Council approves resurfacing at Newfields Play Park as the immediate priority, without the PCC edging option, with £20,000 met from the play equipment replacement budget and the balance from play park reserves, subject to the Council's procurement requirements.
9. Osborne Play Park Resurfacing – That Full Council supports Osborne Play Park resurfacing in principle as a single future project and authorises officers to commence a tender exercise during the current financial year, with the resulting tender and funding requirement to be brought back before any contract is awarded.

57.26.Notes of the Budget and Administration Working Group.

To consider the recommendations arising from the Budget and Administration Working Group meeting held on 17 September 2026. Full notes of the meeting are included within the agenda pack.
Recommendations:

1. Street Licensing – That Full Council supports further exploratory work on the potential adoption of street licensing, including appropriate legal and financial advice and information from other authorities, with a further report to be brought back before any commitment is made.
2. Festive Lights – Future Provision – That Full Council supports the development of costed options for the future provision of festive lighting, including leasing and purchasing models, alternative infrastructure, switching arrangements and electrical works.
3. Festive Lights – Budget Transfer – That Full Council approves the transfer of the remaining £1,759 from the Armed Forces Day budget to support the Festive Lights switch-on activity.
4. Town Hall – Heads of Terms – That Full Council agrees to progress the Town Hall Heads of Terms to the legal stage and authorises officers to instruct the appropriate legal advisers to prepare the lease documentation on that basis.
5. Town Hall – Fit-out – That the proposed Town Hall fit-out, including the scope of works, professional support and associated costs, be brought back to members for consideration once the specification and costings have been completed.
6. Town Hall – Professional Services – That Full Council notes that the Town Hall fit-out brief and costings are being refined and that a substantive proposal will be brought back to members before any significant professional appointment or capital expenditure is committed.
7. Bookkeeping and Accountancy Support – That the update on the introduction of external bookkeeping and accountancy support from 1 October 2026 be noted.
8. Financial Regulations – That Full Council notes the progress being made on the review of the Financial Regulations, with the completed revised regulations to be brought forward for adoption following final review by the Budget and Administration Working Group.
9. Investment Strategy – That Full Council notes the requirement for the Council to have an Investment Strategy and supports the preparation of a draft strategy for subsequent consideration and approval.
10. Half-Year Financial Position – That Full Council notes the half-year financial position and that individual budget pressures will continue to be monitored through the Council's regular financial reporting.
11. NJC Pay Award 2026/27 – That the nationally agreed 3.3% NJC pay award, effective retrospectively from 1 April 2026, and its associated budget implications be noted.
12. Volunteer Database – That Full Council agrees to discontinue the volunteer database subscription and that volunteering opportunities and community information instead be signposted through the Council's existing communication channels.

58.26. Proposal for the Twinning of Berwick-upon-Tweed and Zeewolde

To consider a proposal to investigate the possibility of establishing a formal twinning relationship between Berwick-upon-Tweed and Zeewolde, Netherlands, building on the longstanding 34-year relationship between Berwick Rangers Juniors and VV Zeewolde. Recommendations:

1. To support, in principle, further investigation into the possibility of establishing a twinning relationship between Berwick-upon-Tweed and Zeewolde.
2. To authorise the Chief Officer, in consultation with the Mayor, to make initial contact with representatives of Zeewolde, facilitated where appropriate by Berwick Rangers Juniors.
3. To invite representatives of Berwick Rangers Juniors to contribute to the discussions and provide further information regarding the existing relationship with VV Zeewolde.

4. To request a further report to Full Council setting out the outcome of those discussions, together with the potential objectives, benefits, governance arrangements and financial implications, before any decision is taken to enter into a formal twinning arrangement.

No commitment to formal twinning or expenditure will arise from agreeing these recommendations.

59.26. Representatives on Outside Bodies

To consider appointing a Council representative to the Youth Project Board.

60.26. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Council will be held on Monday 26 October 2026 at 18:00.

61.26. Part 3 - Confidential Items

To consider and, if appropriate, PASS A RESOLUTION pursuant to Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 to exclude the press and public from Part 3 of the meeting on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.
Part 3 may include matters relating to staffing, contractual negotiations or commercially sensitive information, where the Council determines that the circumstances justify exclusion.

62.26. Honorary Civic Recognition

To consider a confidential nomination for civic recognition in accordance with the Council's adopted Honorary Freemen and Freewomen Policy.

63.26. Councillor Development Session

To receive a member development session.

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 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.

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

53.26. Part 1- Items for Decisions

The Council moved into Part 1 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.

BERWICK-UPON-TWEED TOWN COUNCIL

Council

Time and date
Wednesday 9 September 2026 at 12:00

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

Notes
Environment and Communities Working Group members:
Cllrs Graham Brown, (Chair)
Mike Greener
Paul Hillier
Ayrin Khan
Rosemary Mackenzie
Gary Smith
Thomas Stewart
Jane Turton. (Mayor)

1. Apologies for Absence

The Chair opened the meeting and invited apologies for absence. None were received.

2. Disclosures of Interest.

Members were asked to declare any interests. No disclosures were recorded.

3. Notes of the Previous Meeting

The previous notes had already been agreed at full council. Members were invited to raise any updates or comments, but no separate amendments were made at this point, with the understanding that several earlier matters would reappear later on the agenda.

4. Spend vs Budget to date.

The Working Group reviewed spend against budget, with particular attention to the market and the wider town centre improvements budget.

Members were advised that the current figures are affected by coding issues, including expenditure which should be met from reserves. A detailed breakdown will therefore be prepared so that market expenditure can be separated clearly from other town centre improvement work.

The market itself is performing strongly on income. Members also supported a clearer budget structure for the next financial year, separating the main market cost headings so that income and expenditure can be monitored more transparently.

Recommendation: That Full Council notes the current position on market and town centre improvement expenditure, including that a detailed breakdown will be considered through the Budget and Administration Working Group and that the market budget structure will be presented more clearly in the next financial year.

5. Biodiversity and Sustainability

The Working Group considered the updated Biodiversity and Sustainability report following the comments previously made at Full Council and broadly supported the revised document.

Members did not support green-roof bus shelters as a spending priority, preferring practical and proportionate measures at ground level. The Group also discussed the use of glyphosate, particularly close to the river and in play and recreation areas.

A separate letter is to be sent to Northumberland County Council requesting its risk or impact assessment for glyphosate use and asking for greater caution in sensitive locations. The updated Biodiversity and Sustainability report is now being referred back to Full Council.

Recommendation: That Full Council endorses the updated Biodiversity and Sustainability report as referred by the Environment and Communities Working Group, noting the Working Group's view that green-roof bus shelters should not be progressed as a spending priority.

6. Operations Manager Report

The Working Group received the Operations Manager's update covering staffing, seasonal displays, public seating, bus shelters, allotments and other public-realm matters.

Members welcomed the progress being made with the new apprentices and the positive feedback received on the town's seasonal displays. The Group also agreed that the volunteer who restored the decorative fronts of benches in Seafield Park should be recognised with a plaque and a formal letter of thanks.

The bus shelter survey will be completed and brought back with possible seating locations and indicative costs. Officers will also approach Bernicia regarding the former Ladywell allotment area as a possible site for re-establishing allotments.

Recommendation: That Full Council notes the Operations Manager update and the follow-up actions agreed by the Working Group.

8. Pump Track

The Working Group considered the position following confirmation from Berwick Youth Project that it could no longer progress the proposed pump track in its current form.

Members were clear that the need for additional facilities for teenagers and young people remains and reaffirmed their support for the principle of a pump track in Berwick. The Group did not consider that the project should simply be treated as closed because the present delivery route has stalled.

The preferred approach is to keep the project under active feasibility review, continue discussions with Berwick Youth Project and preserve the research, consultation and development work already undertaken. This does not make any further financial commitment at this stage, and a substantive proposal would return to Council when there is a viable route forward.

Recommendation: That Full Council reaffirms its support in principle for a pump track in Berwick and supports continued feasibility discussions with Berwick Youth Project, without any further financial commitment at this stage, with a substantive proposal to be brought back when a viable route forward has been identified.

9. Tide Time Books

The Working Group considered the future of the Tide Time Books following confirmation that the publication would no longer continue to be funded personally by Bill Creswell.

Members considered that the booklet remains a useful local resource and noted continuing public demand for tide information. Historic printing costs were modest, and the possibility of external support or sponsorship was also discussed.

The Group supported continuing the Tide Time Books in principle, but final print quantities, costs and any partnership contribution should be established before an order is placed.

Recommendation: That Full Council supports the continued production of Tide Time Books in principle and asks officers to confirm the proposed print quantity, final cost and any available external support before printing is commissioned

10. Planters Tweedmouth

The Working Group considered a proposal for additional planters on Tweedmouth Main Street. The original option was for five rectangular timber planters, but members considered that three would provide a better fit for the available space without overloading the streetscape.

The proposed planters are approximately one metre long, 500 millimetres wide and 900 millimetres high. The indicative cost for three is approximately £4,418.87 including delivery.

Officers will confirm land ownership and the final locations, with the layout maintaining the required clear pedestrian route. Planting can then take place during the appropriate tree-planting season.

Recommendation: That Full Council approves the purchase of three rectangular timber planters for Tweedmouth Main Street at an indicative cost of £4,418.87 including delivery, subject to final confirmation of land ownership and positioning.

11. Shop Front Vinyl's

The Working Group discussed the possibility of extending the shop-front vinyls project to long-empty premises on Marygate where vacant and deteriorating frontages are having a negative visual impact.
Members supported further investigation but did not want expenditure committed before the position on future occupiers, owner or agent permission and the condition of the buildings had been established.
Officers will therefore check occupancy prospects, permissions and detailed costs and bring a fuller report back before any decision to proceed.
Recommendation: That Full Council notes the exploratory work on possible additional shop-front vinyls and that no expenditure will be committed until the necessary permissions, occupancy position and detailed costs have been established.

12. Play Park Resurfacing

The Working Group reviewed resurfacing requirements at Newfields and Osborne play parks. The condition at Newfields has deteriorated significantly over the summer and members considered it to be the immediate priority.

The estimated cost of the Newfields work is around £25,000. Members supported proceeding without the PCC edging option, with £20,000 available from the play equipment replacement budget and the balance to be met from play park reserves. The work will need to proceed in accordance with the Council's procurement requirements.

For Osborne, the Group supported treating the resurfacing as one complete future project rather than splitting the work. The preferred approach is to commence the tender process during the current financial year, with delivery or invoicing planned for the next financial year.

Recommendation 1: That Full Council approves resurfacing at Newfields Play Park as the immediate priority, without the PCC edging option, with £20,000 met from the play equipment replacement budget and the balance from play park reserves, subject to the Council's procurement requirements.

Recommendation 2: That Full Council supports Osborne Play Park resurfacing in principle as a single future project and authorises officers to commence a tender exercise during the current financial year, with the resulting tender and funding requirement to be brought back before any contract is awarded.

13. Items for Future Agendas

Members identified several items for future agendas. A fuller discussion on bus services was requested, including wider route concerns and opportunities for service improvements. Dog fouling was also raised again, with members preferring fixed signage over path markings and wanting further practical action in places such as Five Arches and around the football field.

Additional future items included possible community asset or social value proposals linked to Northumbrian Water, a review of defibrillator coverage and maintenance gaps, and continuing interest in the condition and future of the public phone box that remains under BT ownership. Members also discussed the lighthouse bicentenary and expressed frustration that the Harbour Commission had not communicated clearly about any programme of events, despite the significance of the *200-year* anniversary and references to activity in October.

The committee wanted the council to seek clearer information on what, if anything, was being organised and to do so quickly enough to support publicity if appropriate.

14. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting was noted as *Wednesday 7 October 2026 at 12pm*.

BERWICK-UPON-TWEED TOWN COUNCIL

Budget and Administration Working

Time and date
Thursday 17 September 2026 at 16:00

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

Budget and Administration Working Group members:
Cllr Thomas Stewart (Chair)
Cllr Janice Bowden,
Cllr Rachel Driver,
Cllr Mike Greener,
Cllr John Robertson,
Cllr Jane Turton (Mayor)

All were present

Notes

61.26. Apologies for Absence

No apologies for absence were received. The meeting proceeded with all expected members present.

62.26. Disclosures of interest

Cllr Robertson declared an interest in relation to the Town Hall Heads of Terms item. He stated that the proposal could result in a financial benefit to him if it proceeded and confirmed that he would withdraw from the discussion.

Cllr Thomas Stewart and Cllr Greener also declared interests in relation to the Town Hall Heads of Terms arising from their roles as trustees of the Freemen Trustees.

In relation to the separate item on architectural and professional services, Cllr Robertson confirmed that he was content to participate in the discussion but indicated that he would be reluctant to express a view on the appointment of one consultant over another.

63.26. Notes of previous Meeting

The Working Group reviewed the notes of the previous meeting. One member asked that it be recorded that a report on service level agreements, expected for the September meeting, had not yet been brought forward because of workload pressures.

No further inaccuracies were raised, and the notes were then accepted as the record of the previous meeting.
Decision: Notes of the previous meeting were accepted as an accurate record, with the outstanding service level agreement report noted.

64.26. Notes of the Market Task Group

The Budget and Administration Working Group considered the recommendations from the Market Task Group.

Members were positive about the performance of the market to date, particularly the level of rental income, but felt that a clearer picture of the full income and expenditure position is needed before considering further investment. The Working Group did not consider that a separate market improvement budget line was necessary at this stage, and officers will instead produce a full market income and expenditure breakdown.

The Group also considered the potential adoption of street licensing. There may be benefits from greater local control, particularly around the management and appearance of the town centre, but there are also legal, financial and operational implications which need to be properly understood.

The view of the Working Group was therefore that this should progress cautiously and remain exploratory at this stage. No commitment is being made to taking on street licensing.

Recommendation: That Full Council supports further exploratory work on the potential adoption of street licensing, including appropriate legal and financial advice and information from other authorities, with a further report to be brought back before any commitment is made.

The detailed market income and expenditure position will be brought back to the Budget and Administration Working Group separately.

65.26. Notes of the Festive Lights Task Group

The Working Group received the Festive Lights Task Group update.
There are a number of longer-term issues around the existing brackets, future infrastructure and how the Council wishes to provide festive lighting in the future.
Rather than rush into a particular solution, the Group supported a wider options review covering leasing and purchasing, alternative infrastructure, electrical works, switching arrangements and future contractor arrangements.
Discussions will also take place with the Riders regarding the use of the existing brackets and alternative locations for the shields, and Rotary will be involved in the wider discussion about future festive lighting arrangements.
The Group also clarified that the remaining event funding available for transfer was £1,759 from the Armed Forces Day budget.

Recommendation 1: That Full Council supports the development of costed options for the future provision of festive lighting, including leasing and purchasing models, alternative infrastructure, switching arrangements and electrical works.
Recommendation 2: That Full Council approves the transfer of the remaining £1,759 from the Armed Forces Day budget to support the Festive Lights switch-on activity.

66.26. Town Hall – Draft Heads of Terms from the Freemen Trustees

The Budget and Administration Working Group considered the draft Heads of Terms for the proposed lease of the ground floor of the Town Hall in detail.
The Group agreed that the Heads of Terms should be progressed. This means moving the proposal into the next stage, with the legal documentation then being prepared on the basis of those agreed terms.
A small number of drafting points were identified during the discussion, principally around the plans, the distinction between the two areas being leased and the respective responsibilities of the parties. These can be dealt with as part of the legal drafting process.
Separately, the Working Group considered the proposed fit-out of the accommodation. No decision is being sought on that tonight. Officers are refining the specification and obtaining more detailed and proportionate costings. Once that work has been completed, the fit-out proposals and associated costs will be brought back to members for consideration.
So, the position is straightforward: the Heads of Terms are progressing to the legal stage; the detailed fit-out and expenditure will come back separately once properly costed.

Recommendation 1: That Full Council agrees to progress the Town Hall Heads of Terms to the legal stage and authorises officers to instruct the appropriate legal advisers to prepare the lease documentation on that basis.
Recommendation 2: That the proposed Town Hall fit-out, including the scope of works, professional support and associated costs, be brought back to members for consideration once the specification and costings have been completed.

67.26. Town Hall – Architectural and Professional Services

The Working Group also considered the next stage of the internal fit-out.
The discussion identified that the professional brief needs to be refined so that specialist input is concentrated on the areas where it is genuinely required, particularly listed-building and technical matters.
Officers will now refine that brief, check the conditions associated with the existing listed-building consent and obtain more detailed and proportionate costings.
The accessible toilet remains part of the options being considered and has not been ruled either in or out. That decision should be taken once members have proper cost information in front of them.
The Working Group did not support progressing the professional-fee proposals in their current form. Instead, it asked for the brief to be tightened and the costs to be tested before the matter returns.
Recommendation: That Full Council notes that the Town Hall fit-out brief and costings are being refined and that a substantive proposal will be brought back to members before any significant professional appointment or capital expenditure is committed.

68.26. Bookkeeping and Accountancy Support from 1 October 2026

The Working Group noted that the new external bookkeeping arrangements will commence from 1 October.
The purpose of the arrangement is to provide greater resilience within the Council's financial processes while releasing officer capacity for other core work.
The bookkeeper will undertake the day-to-day preparation and coding work, with councillor authorisation and RFO oversight continuing to form part of the Council's financial controls.
Higher-level month-end and accountancy support will provide an additional level of oversight.
The Working Group was satisfied that the implementation arrangements were progressing.
Recommendation: That the update on the introduction of external bookkeeping and accountancy support from 1 October 2026 be noted.

69.26. Review of Financial Regulations

The Working Group considered the initial review of the Council's Financial Regulations.

A number of amendments have been identified, including updated legislative references, revised procurement thresholds, clearer payment-authorisation arrangements and separating the Scheme of Delegation into its own document.
The Working Group did not consider it appropriate to rush the revised regulations directly to Full Council.
I will now incorporate the agreed amendments and produce a complete revised document. That will return to the Budget and Administration Working Group for a final review before coming to Full Council for adoption.
Recommendation: That Full Council notes the progress being made on the review of the Financial Regulations, with the completed revised regulations to be brought forward for adoption following final review by the Budget and Administration Working Group.

70.26. Investment Strategy

The Working Group considered the requirement for the Council to have an Investment Strategy.
This follows the recommendation made through internal audit and reflects the level of funds currently held by the Council.
The Group recognised that it could not recommend approval of a strategy which had not yet been drafted.
The next stage is therefore for an Investment Strategy to be prepared, supported by appropriate advice relevant to the local government sector. This will consider security, liquidity and how the Council can appropriately manage funds which are not required for immediate operational purposes.
A draft strategy will then return through the Working Group before coming to Full Council for approval.
Recommendation: That Full Council notes the requirement for the Council to have an Investment Strategy and supports the preparation of a draft strategy for subsequent consideration and approval.

71.26. Expenditure vs Budget Year to Date

The Working Group reviewed the Council's financial position at approximately the halfway point of the financial year.
The annual expenditure budget is £686,159. Recorded expenditure at the reporting point was £305,729, with a further £20,353 committed.
The September payroll had not been included in those figures and was approximately £34,000, including the backdated pay award. Once that is taken into account, expenditure and commitments are approximately 52.5% of the annual budget at the halfway point.
Overall, therefore, the Council's expenditure position remains broadly where we would expect it to be at this stage.
There are individual budget headings which need to continue to be monitored, particularly town improvement projects, play-area costs and the splash park.
The Working Group also noted that individual expenditure headings need to be considered alongside associated income and earmarked reserves before concluding that a genuine overspend exists. For example, Tweedmouth Feast showed expenditure above its gross budget but, after taking account of associated income, the net cost was approximately £393 below budget.
Recommendation: That Full Council notes the half-year financial position and that individual budget pressures will continue to be monitored through the Council's regular financial reporting.

72.26. NJC Pay award 2026/27

The Working Group noted the nationally agreed NJC pay award for 2026/27.
The award is 3.3% and applies retrospectively from 1 April 2026.

The financial impact has been considered as part of the wider half-year financial review, and the higher September payroll includes the backdated element of the award.
<u>Recommendation:</u> That the nationally agreed 2026/27 NJC pay award and its associated budget implications be noted.

73.26. Volunteer Database

The Working Group reviewed the Council's existing volunteer database subscription. While the original concept of providing a shared volunteering resource was sound, current usage is extremely limited. There are only nine entries on the system, several of which are not active volunteer contacts of the type the database was intended to support.
The Group therefore did not consider that continuing a separate subscription represented value for money.
The preferred approach is to retain any genuinely useful contacts appropriately and provide volunteering and community-group signposting through the Council's existing website and communication channels.
<u>Recommendation:</u> That Full Council agrees to discontinue the volunteer database subscription and that volunteering opportunities and community information instead be signposted through the Council's existing communication channels.

74.26. Items for Next Agenda and Actions Arising

Through the course of the meeting, members identified several matters to return to at a future session. These included the market income-versus-expenditure breakdown, the revised Financial Regulations, a drafted investment strategy, further Town Hall fit-out costings and brief refinement, and the developing festive-lights options work.

The item itself did not generate a separate stand-alone discussion beyond consolidating those follow-up points already captured under earlier agenda items.

75.26. Date of Next Meeting

The published next-meeting date of Thursday 15 October 2026 at 4.00 pm was reviewed because of a member's availability. After considering several alternatives, the Group agreed to bring the meeting forward by one week.

The next Budget and Administration Working Group meeting was therefore rescheduled to Thursday 8 October 2026 at 4.00 pm.
The next meeting of the Budget and Administration Working Group was rescheduled to Thursday 8 October 2026 at 4.00 pm.

BERWICK-UPON-TWEED TOWN COUNCIL

Proposal to Investigate Twinning between Berwick-upon-Tweed and Zeewolde, Netherlands

1. Purpose of Report

To consider a request from Berwick Rangers Juniors Football Club for the Town Council to investigate the possibility of establishing a formal twinning relationship between Berwick-upon-Tweed and Zeewolde in the Netherlands.

At this stage, Council is not being asked to approve a formal twinning arrangement, but to determine whether the proposal should be explored further.

2. Background

The Town Council received a request from Craig Rowan, Chairman of Berwick Rangers Juniors Football Club, asking the Council to consider establishing a twinning arrangement between Berwick-upon-Tweed and Zeewolde.

Berwick Rangers Juniors and VV Zeewolde have maintained a youth football exchange for approximately 34 years. Over that period, the relationship has involved generations of young people, coaches, volunteers and host families from both communities.

The football club considers that the existing relationship provides a strong foundation upon which a wider relationship between the two towns could potentially be developed.

Berwick Rangers Juniors has indicated that discussions have also commenced with representatives in Zeewolde and has offered to facilitate introductions between Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council and the Mayor and councillors of Zeewolde.

3. Potential Scope

A formal relationship could potentially extend beyond the existing football exchange and provide opportunities to explore links in areas such as:

- youth and sporting exchanges;

- culture and heritage;
- education and community organisations;
- tourism and destination promotion;
- local business and economic links; and
- civic and community exchanges.

These opportunities would need to be explored with representatives from Zeewolde before any recommendation regarding formal twinning could be made.

4. Town Twinning Arrangements

There is no prescribed statutory procedure that a UK local authority must follow to establish a town twinning arrangement. The House of Commons Library describes town twinning in the UK as a voluntary and informal arrangement, with the form of the relationship being determined by the communities and authorities concerned.

This provides the Council with flexibility to determine what type of relationship, if any, would be appropriate for Berwick-upon-Tweed.

It would therefore be appropriate for initial discussions to take place before Council considers entering into any formal arrangement.

5. Financial Implications

There are no significant financial implications arising from the recommendation contained within this report, other than officer time associated with initial discussions and investigation.

Should the proposal progress, a subsequent report should identify any potential expenditure associated with a twinning arrangement, including civic visits, events, administration, signage or other activities.

Any expenditure would need to be authorised under an appropriate statutory power and approved through the Council's normal budgetary processes. Eligible parish and town councils may exercise the General Power of Competence under the Localism Act 2011, subject to meeting the prescribed eligibility requirements.

No financial commitment to a twinning arrangement is proposed at this stage.

6. Considerations

Before entering into a formal arrangement, the Council may wish to establish:

- whether Zeewolde wishes to pursue a reciprocal formal relationship;
- the objectives and anticipated benefits of twinning;
- how community organisations, young people and businesses could participate;
- how the established Berwick Rangers Juniors/VV Zeewolde relationship could support the wider partnership;
- what governance or coordinating arrangements would be required;
- the likely level of activity expected from both councils; and
- whether there would be any ongoing financial or staffing implications.

It would also be appropriate to invite representatives of Berwick Rangers Juniors to contribute to this initial work and explain their experience of the existing relationship with Zeewolde.

7. Recommendation

Full Council is recommended to:

1. **Support, in principle, further investigation into the possibility of establishing a twinning relationship between Berwick-upon-Tweed and Zeewolde;**
2. **Authorise the Chief Officer, in consultation with the Mayor, to make initial contact with representatives of Zeewolde, facilitated where appropriate by Berwick Rangers Juniors;**
3. **Invite representatives of Berwick Rangers Juniors to contribute to the discussions and provide further information regarding the existing 34-year relationship with VV Zeewolde; and**
4. **Request that a further report be presented to Full Council setting out the outcome of those discussions, the potential objectives, benefits, governance arrangements and financial implications before any decision is taken to enter into a formal twinning arrangement.**

No commitment to formal twinning or expenditure would be made as a result of agreeing these recommendations.