



Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council

Minutes of the Town Council Budget and Administration Committee
Meeting held on Monday, 10 June 2024 at 6.00pm in The Meeting
Room, Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council Office, Unit 1, 82 – 88
Marygate, Berwick-upon-Tweed

PRESENT:

Councillors: T Stewart (Chair)
M Greener
L Hawken
R Mackenzie

IN ATTENDANCE:

Gareth Davies, Town Clerk
Stephen Cozens, Assistant to the Clerk
Cllr G Smith
1 member of the public

MINUTE NO.	TITLE AND DESCRIPTION OF ITEM	Mover	Secunder	Decision
BA007/24	OPEN SESSION			
	<p>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.</p> <p>This is for a period of 15 minutes overall and is limited to 3 minutes per person.</p>			<p>Members asked questions and raised points on Spittal Splash Park including repair and running costs, age and life expectancy. The Town Clerk provided a response that an answer would be better provided when the reports and invoices involved with the problems at start-up of the Splash Park were received.</p> <p>After which, the Committee RESOLVED that the Splash Park be deferred to the Communities & Local Services Committee for discussion before it is brought back to this Committee.</p>
BA008/24	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE			
	To receive apologies for absence.	N/A	N/A	Apologies for absence were received from Cllr R Driver.
BA009/24	MINUTES			
	To sign as a correct record the minutes of the Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council Budget and Administration Committee meeting held on Tuesday, 07 May 2024.	Nem con		The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 07 May 2024 were agreed and signed as a correct record.
BA0010/24	DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS			

	<p>(i) Unless already entered in the Council's Register of Members' interests, members are required to disclose any personal interest, (which includes any disclosable pecuniary interest), they may have in any of the items included on the agenda for the meeting in accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council on 9 July 2012, and are reminded that if they have any personal interests of a prejudicial nature they must not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must leave the room.</p> <p>(ii) To receive and consider requests from members who have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any items on the agenda an application for dispensation under section 33 of the Localism Act 2011 to enable members to participate in discussions and voting.</p>	N/A	N/A	<p>i. The Town Clerk reminded Members of the need to keep their Register of Interests up to date. There were no disclosures of interests.</p> <p>ii. There were no requests for dispensation.</p>
BA011/24	RESPONSES TO AUDIT			
	To receive an update from the Assistant to the Clerk.	Nem con		The Assistant to the Town Clerk provided a verbal update that work was ongoing by the Internal Auditor and that reports were expected in time for the June meeting of Council.

				<p>Members raised a number of enquiries including on the asset register, privacy policy, financial risk assessment, safe working, fire safety, corporate risk assessment, training policy with record for staff and councillors.</p> <p>After which, the Committee RESOLVED to note the update.</p>
BA012/24	ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN			
	To consider the Annual Governance and Accountability Return.	Nem con		<p>The Assistant to the Clerk distributed an explanation of variances in the Accounting Statements for 2022/2023 and the Town Clerk introduced the item including the need to restate some of these statements.</p> <p>Members asked a number of questions including on asset values, times scales for the year end and AGAR, the working details report, ends of year reconciliation document and statement of reserves.</p> <p>Members noted that papers for Committee meetings are distributed to all Councillors, Further to this, and ahead of the next meeting of Council, the Chair would send an email to all Councillors including those</p>

				<p>not on the this Committee, drawing their attention to the papers they have received regarding this item.</p> <p>After which, the Committee RESOLVED to note the background papers and explanations provided.</p>
BA013/24	SCHEDULE OF POLICIES			
	To receive an update.	Nem con		<p>Members raised a number of queries and questions including updating of the document, the Protocol of Meetings being added to the Communications Strategy, the Social Media Policy, the Complaints Policy, and the Equality and Diversity Policy.</p> <p>The Town Clerk updated Members that priorities are setting out the framework for Safe Working, Fire Risk and Corporate Risk as well as the reporting structure and planning work when the new member of staff is appointed.</p> <p>Updates then included that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated NALC Financial Regulations would be brought to the September meeting of this Committee before being brought to Council whilst a light touch approach

				<p>would be applied to the Standing Orders by May 2025, bearing in mind the elections of that year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Code of Conduct be brought to the September meeting of Council, with the Town Clerk liaising with other Town Council's for their view as to the version they are using.• List of Subscriptions / Direct Debits was completed at the Annual Meeting, but a more detailed version is to be produced and will be brought to Budget Council in January.• Schedule of Delegations will be revised once an Operation's Manager has been appointed, with an item for discussion at the July meeting of this Committee.• The last column of the Annual Budget should be changed to 2025, as should the list of DD's, Schedule of Salaries, Risk Assessment and Schedule of Subscriptions.
--	--	--	--	--

				<ul style="list-style-type: none">• DPA / GDPR it was planned would be brought to the next meeting of this Committee.• Protocol on Member Officer Relations is superseded by the Civility & Respect Policy to be reviewed after 3 years, i.e. February 2027.• Communications Strategy has been completed with the update by the Town Clerk noted that use of Social Media to be reviewed before the next election.• Protocol for Meetings to be appended to the Communications Strategy and reviewed in November 2026 along with the Social Media and Complaints Policies.• Equality and Diversity Policy to be reviewed in April 2027 with staff to check the website and add as necessary.• Privacy Statement which is law and not policy, staff to check availability on website.
--	--	--	--	---

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training Policy. Councillors should decide on priorities and budget allowance for both Councillors and Staff with both policies to be brought to the September meeting of this Committee and a training program to be deferred to the Staffing Committee. • A standard Health & Safety Policy to be explored and brought to the September meeting of this Committee. <p>The Town Clerk then updated Members that Communities and Local Services should consider the Allotments Letting Policy and Memorial Plaques Policy. After which, the Committee RESOLVED: To note the updates, and That Cllr R Mackenzie and the Town Clerk discuss the Schedule of Policies before the next meeting of this Committee.</p>
BA014/24	LEAFLET DROP / RESIDENTS NEWSLETTER			
	To consider a way forward.	Nem con		The Town Clerk updated Members of responses to the survey and a summary will be brought to Council, and it has been

				<p>indicated that Councillors wish to repeat the process of the leaflet drop.</p> <p>The Committee then RESOLVED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To agree a bi-yearly leaflet drop with good estimates of cost brought to the next meeting of this Committee, and 2. That commercial costs are sought and brought to the next meeting of this Committee for a residents newsletter to allow a decision to be made regarding frequency. <p>The Town Clerk then updated Members that newsletters will need to be suspended after February of 2025 due to the elections of that year.</p>
BA015/24	FUTURE AGENDAS			
	To consider the report.	Nem con		<p>The Town Clerk introduced the item and updated Members there would be regular item on the agenda for the action plan items and progress, audit preparation and follow-up, a finance queries log, policies and progress, follow up on the Communication Plan and internal controls.</p>

				<p>Also as a part of standard documents there would be an annual diary of events, newsletters and town council meetings with whose lead on events, signatories duties and powers, outstanding issues on the website and IT, preparation schedule for all Civic Events and the Community Emergency Plan.</p> <p>The Committee then RESOLVED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To note the update, and 2. That the document composed by Cllr R Mackenzie be appended to these minutes.
BA016/24	VIREMENT			
	To consider making a virement of £1,056 from general reserves to budget code 4100 (Accounting Software) due to increase charges in the Annual Support and Maintenance for the finance software plus additional costs for Year-End Processing and Rollover.	Nem con		Council RESOLVED to approve the virement of £1,056 from general reserves to budget code 4100 (Accounting Software).
BA017/24	NOTIFICATION OF PAYMENTS AND RECEIPTS			
	To note payments and receipts in March and April.	Nem con		Members asked a number of questions and raised a number of queries including why all cash books are published for March and not April, the length of the lease for the office and a way forward with this Committee to

				make recommendations to Council for options at the end of the lease, a salaries payment to Northumberland County Council, unused cashbooks such as Petty Cash and timing of payments to charities from the Mayor's Charity Account. The Committee then unanimously RESOLVED without division to note the schedule of payments and receipts.
BA018/24	BANK RECONCILIATIONS			
	To note the bank reconciliation processes for March and April.	Nem con		The Town Clerk updated Members that as actual bank statements form part of this process they will need to be presented in a redacted form as they may show individual's names and salaries payments. After which, the Committee unanimously RESOLVED that the Chair sign and receive the bank reconciliations for March and April 2024.
BA019/24	PURCHASE ORDERS			
	To note the purchase orders raised.	Nem con		Members asked a number of questions and raised a number of queries including on Sanderson, McCreath & Edney, the authorisation process and Riding of the Bounds.

				<p>The Committee then RESOLVED that Officers write to the Riding of the Bounds Committee seeking a full report of their activities and clarification on their financial background, the success of the 2024 event, expected spending for next year and expectations of the Town Council's financial involvement.</p> <p>After which, Members unanimously RESOLVED to note all active Purchase Orders for the previous time-period.</p>
BA020/24	ACTION PLAN			
	To receive an update.	Nem con		<p>Members raised a number of points including the need for actions from the Planning Committee to be added, Plan preparation schedule for all civic events (53) can have a minute number as can Report on Communications including Website (52). Also, that actions from this meeting include the Splash Park, Riding of the Bounds and Newsletter costings, Produce Precept leaflet and survey (50) can be amended to 'Produce budget leaflet and survey' and an item to be added for statutory income under the 1926 act which</p>

				is received from the Freeman of Berwick-upon-Tweed. The Committee then unanimously RESOLVED to note the updates provided.
At this point it was unanimously RESOLVED to suspend standing orders sufficiently to allow the meeting to proceed beyond 8pm.				
BA021/24	EXPENDITURE VS BUDGET YEAR TO DATE			
	To note the report.	Nem con		The Town Clerk updated Members and questions were raised by the Committee including on budget allocations revisions and control totals, electricity for the office, mis-posts in local services payroll, corporate subscriptions, the transport budget, mayor making, movement from general reserves and formatting of reports including availability of documents from the accounting software. After which, the Committee RESOLVED : <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That suppliers of financial software be added to the action plan and to be explored in May 2006, and 2. To note the report.

BA022/24	DATE OF NEXT MEETING			
	The next meeting of the committee will be held on Monday 22 July 2024, at 6:00 pm.	N/A	N/A	Noted.

Regular agenda items to include:

- Progress on action plan items
- Audit prep and follow up
- A finance queries log
- Policies – which next?
- Communication – progress/ follow through – communication plan report GD for next B&A Committee
- Which Councillors will pop into office to inspect finance directly?

Action Statutory, General Policies, Notes of Practice – Councillors to meet with Clerk to update list, format and add info from Consultant and NALC (Councillors need a log in to be able to access polices)

Annual diary plan for events, newsletters, Town meeting, posted info to residents to include:

- Date of event etc
- Prep date
- Who should be involved?
- Who is leading?
- What preparation is needed?

RM to provide a trial format for B&A Committee to include EVENT (BTC, CIVIC, TOWN EVENTS, DATE, PREP DATE, WHO is leading (council staff), Outside event contact, which committee?)

This document can then be modified for Work Plans for Town Wardens, Committees etc as required.

This needs to include info from all current staff.

Authorisation of Expenditure via the signatory: *GD to provide advice to B&A committee for discussion*

- Confirm the role of the signatory
- How many responses does Finance Assistant need from e mail authorisation before paying?
- How are finance queries tracked and are they fully resolved? – **a queries log to be commenced**
- **TS to become a signatory once all of the new banking arrangements are in place**

B&A	Budget and Admin						
1.	Produce Precept leaflet and survey Half Yearly Communication- When SEPT?	2024/01	B&A			Done in April – how will survey results be used?	Green
2.	Review on IT system, website and report GD to provide advice to B &A Committee in September having written to other Town Councils to ascertain which e mail system they use currently.	2024/02	B&A			not done	Red
3.	Report on Communications including website. GD Action Plan on Communication Strategy (JUNE)	2023/03	B&A BA059/23 BA077/23		2024/04	not done	Red
4.	Plan preparation schedule for all civic events useful for new manager, admin staff and wardens RM suggested format to next B&A committee	2024/05	B&A				
5.	Develop a Community Emergency Plan GD To locate current NCC plan to enable BTC to have a contacts list to signpost sources of support for Community Should we have a member of staff on call out? (NOVEMBER?)	2022/09	B&A PC029/22		HIGH	Not done	Red