

BERWICK-UPON-TWEED TOWN COUNCIL



Council

Minutes of the Town Council Extraordinary Meeting.

Held on Monday, 14 April 2025 at 6pm

The Meeting Room, Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council Office, Unit 1, 82 – 88 Marygate,
Berwick-upon-Tweed.

Councillors present:

J Robertson (Chair), J Bowden, R Driver, M Greener, L Hawken, R Mackenzie, G Smith, and T Stewart.

Officers present:

Iain McCready – Chief Officer, Steve Cozens – Finance Officer.

Also in Attendance:

1 member of the public.

C159/24

1. OPEN SESSION

A member of the public raised concerns about whether the meeting was quorate and the timing, legitimacy and transparency of decisions regarding committee changes and updates to standing orders and financial regulations so close to the elections in May. Councillors and officers provided responses that changes to standing orders and financial regulations were primarily terminological, changes from committees to working / advisory groups was agreed at a previous meeting of Council and that all decisions would be made by full council, with working groups only making recommendations.

C160/24

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs G Brown, P Rowe and J Turton.

C161/24

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 March 2025 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

C162/24

4. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

- i. There were no disclosures of interest.
- ii. There were no requests for dispensation.

C163/24

5. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

A question was raised by Members regarding the procedure and timeline for reviewing ward boundaries. A response provided by Officers confirmed that current boundaries were last reviewed in 2009 and that Council could contact the Electoral Commission in late summer to explore initiating a review.

Council **RESOLVED** to note and agree the response provided.

Part 1 – Items for Decisions

C164/24

8. ADVISORY AND TASK GROUPS

Council **RESOLVED** that Item 8 be considered before Item 6 as changes to the Standing Orders reflected decisions that may be made during this item.

During the discussion updates were provided that notes would be produced for meeting of working groups etc and that no decisions would be made, only recommendations to Council. At meetings of Council, notes would be presented by the lead Councillor of the working group, before the Mayor presents the recommendations for a decision.

After which, Council **RESOLVED** that:

- i. There be a 12-month trial of a three-tier structure:
 1. Full Council.
 2. Working Groups (e.g. Budget and Administration, Environment).
 3. Advisory/Task Groups (issue/project-specific).
- ii. The following groups be approved in principle:
 - Tourism and Regeneration Advisory Group
 - HR Panel (formerly Staffing Committee)
 - Biodiversity and Sustainability Advisory Group
 - Market Task Group
 - Assets Task Group
 - Grants Advisory Group
- iii. Groups will set their own meeting schedules based on workload.

C165/24

6. STANDING ORDERS

Members asked a number of questions and raised a number of points and during the discussion the key changes were noted as Committees were renamed as working groups and advisory panels, all decisions would now be recommendations to Council, the terminology has been updated for staff roles and there has been a legal amendment under government procurement added to reflect new legislation.

After which, Council unanimously **RESOLVED** to adopt the updated Standing Orders.

C166/24

7. FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

Updates provided included that changes involved the removal of committee devolved powers with all financial decisions to be made by full council, lowering of the tendering threshold from £50,000 to £25,000 and inclusion of new government legislation under section 20.

After which, Council unanimously **RESOLVED** to adopt the updated Financial Regulations.

C167/24

9. TERMS OF REFERENCE

Council **RESOLVED** to defer this to the meeting on 19 May 2025 to allow time for councillor feedback and review of draft documents.

C168/24

10. BANKING ARRANGEMENTS

Updates were provided on previous decisions to move the Town Council's main bank account and subsequent caution due to costs.

After which, Council **RESOLVED** to authorise Officers, in conjunction with the Mayor, to investigate local banking options with final decisions to be brought back to full Council for approval.

C169/24

11. END OF YEAR STATEMENT

During the discussion points raised and updates provided included that the document be amended to clarify the financial year ending 31 March 2025, that the council ended the financial year in a surplus position despite some unbudgeted expenses and that thanks be recorded to the Finance Officer and interim support for maintaining strong financial oversight.

After which, Council **RESOLVED** to approve the End-of-Year Statement.

C170/24

12. BUDGET AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

It was **RESOLVED** on the motion of Cllr R Mackenzie, seconded by Cllr T Stewart to adopt the minutes of the meeting of the Budget and Administration Committee held on 10 March 2025 (noted at the meeting of 31 March 2025).

C171/24

13. COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

It was **RESOLVED** on the motion of Cllr J Bowden, seconded by Cllr J Robertson to adopt the minutes of the meeting of the Communities and Local Services Committee held on 03 March 2025 (noted at the meeting of 31 March 2025).

C172/24

14. PLANNING COMMITTEE

It was **RESOLVED** on the motion of Cllr R Driver, seconded by Cllr T Stewart to adopt the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 17 March 2025 (noted at the meeting of 31 March 2025).

15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Council will be held on Monday, 19 May 2025 at 6 pm.