



BARROW TOWN COUNCIL

Town Hall, Duke Street, Barrow-in-Furness LA14 2LD

Minutes of the Finance Committee held on Tuesday 11th November 2025 at 17.30 pm in the Law Library at the Town Hall, Duke Street, Barrow-Furness.

Cllr M Leach – Chair	Present	Cllr C Altree	Apology
Cllr J McEwan – Vice Chair	Present	Cllr N Phillips	Present
Cllr A Coles	Present	Cllr B Elliot	Apology
Cllr C Thompson	Apology	Cllr F Chatfield	Present
Cllr. K Hyland	Present	Cllr. S Churcher	Present

In attendance: Lesley Smyth (Town Clerk)

F/331/2025 Apologies

Received and accepted from Cllr Elliot, Cllr Altree and Cllr Thompson

F/332/2025 Declarations of Interest

Received from Cllr. Coles and Cllr Phillips in respect of their membership on Westmorland and Furness Council, and from Cllr Coles in respect of his allotment tenancy.

F/333/2025 Exclusion of Press and Public (Public Bodies Admission to Meetings Act 1960)

No issues were considered for exclusion.

F/334/2025 Minutes of the last Meeting held on 14th October 2025

Resolved: To receive the Minutes of the previous meeting of the Finance Committee held on 14th October 2025 and to authorise the Chair to sign them as a correct record. Proposed by Cllr. Chatfield and seconded by Cllr. Coles. All agreed.

F/335/2025 Report on the Finance Action Sheet

The Town Clerk presented the current work programme to enable the Committee to note the progress made across the various actions in which the Committee was involved.

Resolved: To confirm the actions outstanding:

1. To date there has been no acknowledgement from Westmorland and Furness Council in respect of funding the repairs to the patio at the War Memorial.
2. A response to the request to Westmorland and Furness Council for the inclusion of Barrow Town Council in the Community Infrastructure Levy was reported under Min F/231 of 12th February 2025. No further update.

3. The effect on the Council Tax levy due to an increase in the Town Council Precept for 2026-2027 cannot be calculated without the knowledge of the Council Tax Base from Westmorland and Furness Council, which is usually published in mid-December. Therefore, the approval of the increase in Precept scheduled to be agreed at Full Council on 18th November 2025 is deferred until the Council meeting on 20th January 2026.

F/336/2025 Finance Report

The following reports, distributed prior to the meeting, were submitted for approval: -

1. Income & Expenditure Account for the period 1st April to 31st October 2025

Resolved:

Proposed by Cllr. Chatfield and seconded by Cllr. Leach that the accounts here presented be approved. All agreed

2. Allotments Receipts and Payments Account for the period 1st April to 31st October 2025

Resolved:

Proposed by Cllr. Chatfield and seconded by Cllr. Leach that the accounts here presented be approved. All agreed

3. Schedule of payments October 2025

For information only. No issues raised.

4. Bank Reconciliation as of 31st October 2025

Balance brought forward 30.9.25: -	£ 402,816.89
October income	£ 2,992.33
October Expenditure	£ 53,232.28

Balance of Funds	£ 352,576.94
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Unity Trust Bank – General	£ 203,469.71
Cumberland Building Society	£ 85,229.68
Relief Fund	£ 3,545.10
Event Fund	£ 60,332.45

Total Funds as of 31 st October 2025	£ 352,576.94
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F/337/2025 Draft Budget 2026-2027

Further to Min 234 of 14th October 2025. The approved amendments have been actioned and the revised Precept Budget distributed prior to the meeting.

Cllr Phillips made the following comments:

- The 20% increase in the Precept for 2026-2027 to £350K cannot be justified given an intended £40k contingency from the General Fund but no increase in allotment rents.
- The Council need to evidence 'Value for Money' and therefore require a long-term plan outlining the allotment strategy for the coming financial years. The £40k contingency from the General Fund cannot be sustained indefinitely.
- If the budgeted £15k transfer of monies in the General Fund in 2025-2026 to the Reserve Account is actioned, the total reserves at the year-end will equal £100K. If the 25/26 precept remains unchanged then the proposed reserves balance would be £187.5k at the end of the 25/26 financial year. This would be a very high percentage given the level of liability.

Cllr Chatfield made the following comments:

- Councillors are very aware of the lack of due diligence undertaken by both the former Barrow Borough Council and Westmorland and Furness Council before the allotments were defrayed to the Town Council, and their disgraceful condition. It is obvious from the FOI received that very little maintenance to the sites had been undertaken since before Covid. Councillors are equally aware of the vast amount of expenditure the Council has spent in rectifying this situation, in accordance with their statutory requirements. Until such time as the sites are in a satisfactory condition an increase in rents is inconceivable.
- The Allotment Committee have a strategy in place, namely the clearance of asbestos, prohibition of fly tippers, a general removal of waste and the overall desire to provide sites fit for purpose.
- A Report is being presented to the Director and Assistant Director of Finance at Westmorland and Furness Council requesting financial compensation for the former two Council's lack of site administration. If no such compensation is forthcoming it may be that the Town Council will need to consider selling some of the land. If compensation is agreed, then the contingency from the General Fund may be reduced.

Cllr Coles made the following comments:

- An extra liability has been placed on the Council for the maintenance of the Christmas lights at £15k per year.
- The figures to date show the budgeted expenditure for the year to be on target.
- An increase in allotment rents at this point in time is completely unjustifiable.
- The fly-tipping is done by both allotment tenants and local businesses; both therefore are responsible for any required increase in Council Tax to meet the increasing costs for its removal.
- The Town Council is still in its infancy and the Precept for the past two financial years has been far below that of other Cumbrian Towns e.g. Workington. The precept is far too low for the size of the Town.

Cllr Hyland asked when it would be necessary for the Council to consider selling allotment land.

Further she noted:

- Action must be taken to prevent the grazing land tenants from using the allotment water, as they have been doing for many years, but for which they have no legal right.
- An increase in allotment rents cannot be justified until all sites are in a satisfactory condition.
- Rents have not increased since before Covid, which is justified given the poor administration of the sites from Barrow BC and W&F.

In respect of the selling of land it was noted that Westmorland and Furness Council did not provide an asset valuation for the land on its transfer to the Town Council.

Resolved:

Cllr Phillips proposed a 10% increase in allotment rents. This proposal was not seconded and therefore the motion not agreed.

Proposed by Cllr Chatfield and seconded by Cllr Hyland that quotes be secured for two land valuations, one for the land in its current state of disrepair and a second when presented in a satisfactory condition. All agreed.

Further, the Clerk to seek advice from NALC as to whether W&F legally failed in their duty to provide the 'Asset Valuation' at the time of defrayment.

F/338/2025 Community Grant Funding

Cllr Coles recommended the Council seek funding from local companies, noting contributions received by other Town Councils from Companies within their own locality. Possible sources being Kimberley Clarke, Oxley, BAE and MKM.

Cllr Phillips noted the existing 'Community Grant Partnership' in the Town and therefore we must proceed with caution.

The Clerk to investigate.

F/339/2025 Event Support Grants

The following Grant was approved:

- Lakes Arts Festivals. £2,000. Proposed by Cllr Hyland and seconded by Cllr Leach. All agreed.

F/340/2025 Community Support Grants

No applications received.

F/341/2025 Get Barrow Moving

The following Grant was approved:

- Parkside Academy. £1,500. Proposed by Cllr Phillips and seconded by Cllr Churcher. All agreed.

F/342/2025 Brighten Our Corner

The following Grants were approved:

- Spring Mount Youth Church. £1,000. Proposed by Cllr Chatfield and seconded by Cllr McEwan. All agreed.
- Greengate Junior School. £1,000. Proposed by Cllr Leach and seconded by Cllr McEwan. All agreed.
- St. Paul's CE Primary School. £2,000. Proposed by Cllr Coles and seconded by Cllr Chatfield.

F/343/2025 Any Other Business

None.

F/344/2025 Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 9th December 2025 at 17.30pm in the Law Library, Town Hall.

The meeting closed at 18.43 pm

Lesley J Smyth

Town Clerk