



BARROW TOWN COUNCIL

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

Minutes of the Finance Committee held on Tuesday 9th December 2025 at 17.30 pm in the Law Library at the Town Hall, Duke Street, Barrow-Furness.

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

In attendance: Cllr C Rudd Cllr N Holmes.

Lesley Smyth (Town Clerk) Claire Nolan (Deputy Town Clerk)

F/345/2025 Apologies

Received and accepted from Cllr Aintree.

F/346/2025 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/347/2025 Exclusion of Press and Public (Public Bodies Admission to Meetings Act 1960) No issues were considered for exclusion.

F/348/2025 Minutes of the last Meeting held on 11th November 2025

Resolved: To receive the Minutes of the previous meeting of the Finance Committee held on 11th November 2025 and to authorise the Chair to sign them as a correct record. Proposed by Cllr. Chatfield and seconded by Cllr. Churcher. All agreed.

F/349/2025 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. The Clerk was requested to send a further letter direct to A Harty, the Director of Assets at W&F.

2. There still has been no response from Westmorland and Furness to the request for the inclusion of Barrow Town Council in the Community Infrastructure Levy. Cllr Phillips noted

the 'Local Plan' is not expected to be presented for public consultation until the end of 2026, therefore the Town Council will receive no feedback until such time.

3. The notice of Precept for 2026-2027 has been received and will be discussed under Min.351 below.

F/350/2025 Finance Report

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

1. Income & Expenditure Account for the period 1st April to 30th November 2025

The expenditure to date, and the projection for future years on the allotment sites continues to be a cause for concern given the amount of work that is required to bring the sites to an acceptable level of maintenance. The Clerk requested the Committee consider the Allotment Officers' salary and associated costs be paid direct from the Precept, rather than charged direct to the Allotment Account, thus increasing the maintenance budget. This accounting practice is evidenced at several Parish Councils throughout the Country.

The figures here presented showed the effect on the General Account should the committee approve the above request. Resolved:

Proposed by Cllr Chatfield and seconded by Cllr Leach that the allotment officer salary and associated costs, together with the costs of the pool car, be paid direct from the precept. A vote having been taken, 7 agreed, 1 against and 1 abstention.

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 30th November 2025 The figures here presented showed the effect on the Allotments Account should the committee approve the request noted under Min.350(1) above.

The rent paid to Holker Estates who own two of the allotment sites was discussed, noting the maintenance work undertaken on the sites with no recompense from the landowner. The Clerk noted previous correspondence seeking a funding contribution has to date received no response. She was requested to send a follow-up letter, ask for a joint meeting with Holker Management, and to inspect the contract wording with regards to land maintenance. Cllr Phillips requested details for each site in respect of the total number of plots per site, the number of plots tenanted, their respective rent income and the rent paid to Holker Estates.

Resolved: Proposed by Cllr. Chatfield and seconded by Cllr. Leach that the accounts here presented be approved. All agreed 3. Schedule of payments November 2025 For information only. No issues raised.

4. Bank Reconciliation as of 30th November 2025

Balance brought forward 31.10.25: -	£352,576.94
November income	£ 18,897.40
November Expenditure	£ -54,869.26
Balance of Funds	£316,605.08

Unity Trust Bank	£185,639.33
Reserve Account – CBS	£ 85,229.68
Charity Relief Fund	£ 3,754.62
Event Fund	£ 41,981.45
Total Funds as of 30 th November 2025	£316,605.08

F/351/2025 Precept 2026-2027

The proposed Precept figure of £290,429.44 has been received from Westmorland and Furness Council and will be discussed at Full Council on 20th January 2026. Given the figure exceeds £140,000, in accordance with legislation the town council's income and expenditure figures are to be provided for publication on the W&F website.

A request for an increase in the Precept must be provided to W&F by 31st January 2026. Cllr Phillips, referring to min no. 337 of a recommended precept increase of 20%, noted his disapproval of such a high percentage. W&F are only permitted by legislation to increase their tax bill by up to 4.99%, and although the increase to tax bills as a result of the town council increase in precept will be small, the Council need to have a plan in place to show the public why the increase has been requested and how the additional funding will be utilised.

Cllr Elliot enquired if the level of reserves is too high.

1. General Reserve – non-specific funds used for contingencies or unexpected spending not in the base budget. Currently there is £50k. There is no legislative figure on the level of reserves with some council's setting aside between 3-12 months' worth of net revenue. Often the reserve level is interpreted as a percentage of the annual precept figure with common targets falling between 20-50%. In the case of Barrow Town Council this figure would range from £58,357 to £145,895.
2. Ear-Marked Reserve – funds set aside for specific planned future projects or anticipated expenditure. There is currently £35k ear marked as a reserve against the elections scheduled for 2027.

Ultimately the decision on the reserve level rests with the Council Members, who must be able to defend their policy to the electorate and external auditors.

F/352/2025 Event Support Grants

The following Grants were presented for approval:

- Women's Community Matters. Whilst the committee acknowledge the wonderful work of this organisation and consider the planned event to be a wonderful occasion, they were concerned with a lack of clarification on some of the items of expenditure quoted on the application.

Resolved:

Proposed by Cllr Elliot and seconded by Cllr Phillips that the application be declined, with the recommendation that the application may be resubmitted with clearer clarification of costings. All agreed.

- Cumbria Development Education Centre. The application was discussed at length.

Resolved

Proposed by Cllr Phillips and seconded by Cllr Coes that £1,200 be awarded to fund the 'Dissemination and Celebration Event'. All agreed.

F/353/2025 Community Support Grants

The following Grant was presented for approval:

- Friends of George Hastwell School. Funding was requested to enable the school to become a registered charity, which falls outside the remit of approval.

Resolved

Proposed by Cllr Phillips and seconded by Cllr Churcher that the school contact Cumbria Voluntary Service who will be able to assist them becoming an active CIC, which will then enable them to proceed to charitable status. Cllr Phillips noted his willingness to assist the school should it be required.

Once they become a registered charity, they are most welcome to re-apply for funding for a specific event. All agreed.

F/354/2025 Get Barrow Moving No applications.

F/355/2025 Brighten Our Corner No applications.

F/356/2025 Any Other Business None.

F/357/2025 Date of Next Meeting
Tuesday 13th January 2026 at 17.30pm in the Law Library, Town Hall.

The meeting closed at 18.25 pm

Lesley J Smyth
Town Clerk