

Melksham Town Council

Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on Monday 18th March 2024

PRESENT:

Councillor S Crundell (Town Mayor)
Councillor T Price (Deputy Town Mayor)
Councillor P Alford
Councillor P Aves
Councillor G Cooke
Councillor J Crundell
Councillor G Ellis
Councillor A Griffin
Councillor J Hubbard
Councillor J Oatley
Councillor S Rabey
Councillor C Stokes
Councillor J Westbrook

IN ATTENDANCE:

OFFICERS: Andrew Meacham Committee Clerk

Three members of the public, Sgt. Rutter of Melksham Police and one member of the press were present. Two members of the public were present virtually.

724/23 Public Participation

Sue Mortimer

For my first two questions I refer to the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance. JPAG is responsible for issuing proper practices about the governance and accounts of smaller authorities.

First question relates to section two of the guide.

‘Section Two – Proper Practices The Statement of Accounts

2.6. All figures in Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return need to agree to the authority’s primary accounting records. The RFO needs to be able to show how the figures in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return reconcile to those in the cashbook and other primary accounting records. Members need to see this reconciliation when they are asked to approve the statement of accounts in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return. Interested persons inspecting the accounts have a legal right to inspect the accounting records and all books, deeds, contracts, bills, vouchers, receipts and other documents relating to those records, including this reconciliation.

Please will you let me know if and when members were shown such reconciliation?

Second question also relates to section two of the guide.

'Section Two Proper Practices The Statement of Accounts

2.10 Authorities that participate in joint arrangement/committees must ensure that their own accounting records fully and accurately reflect the authority's appropriate share of joint arrangements/committee reserves, income, expenditure, assets and liabilities.

MTC has worked on joint ventures with MWPC including:

Joint neighbourhood plan

MWPC paying towards maintenance and running cost of the Market Place Toilets

Age UK Support Worker

Please can I see the latest reports from MTC on these joint arrangements?

MTC received a MCS Senior Project Grant 30.5.23 £2,500. Is this possible to be carried forward to go towards Age UK Salary for year 2?

725/23 Apologises

There were no apologies.

726/23 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

727/23 Police Report

This item was advanced up the agenda.

Members received an update report from Sgt. Rutter.

There are two new PCSO members of the team.

Melksham Police has been involved in Operation Scorpion where forces join together to deal with issues such as drug dealing, weapons and organised crime. A warrant in Melksham resulted in a drugs seizure and some educational inputs.

Community Engagement has been high. Local surgeries, coffee mornings, school visits etc.

There has been a spike in criminal damages but suspects have been identified.

Where education and other options have failed the force must resort to the courts and this has resulted in a couple of taggings. Incidents have dropped so things do appear to be going in the right direction.

There has been an incident of sexual assault. This is obviously a high impact crime but does not appear to be a one-off incident.

Overall crime trends are on the way down.

Current priorities are anti-social behaviour in Church Walk and business crime. The team are working to support retail staff and lone workers.

Councillor Stokes asked if Sgt Rutter felt the sexual assault might have been prevented if mobile CCTV was active and would it help mitigate issues in the future. Sgt Rutter said that CCTV does tend to prevent and also helps detect after the event. She acknowledged that there had to be proportionality and balance.

The Town Mayor, Councillor S Crundell thanked Sgt. Rutter for her time.

728/23 Questions from Councillors

There were no questions from councillors.

729/23 Minutes

The minutes of Monday 26 February 2024, having previously been circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor, Councillor S Crundell.

730/23 Town Mayor's Announcements

There were no Mayor's announcements.

731/23 Reports from Unitary Councillors

Councillor Alford raised the matter of Melksham Pet Foodbank wishing to use the room attached to the Church Street Toilets. Wiltshire Council are willing to lease the building to Melksham Town County on a 7-year nil cost lease. Melksham Town Council could then make it available to a community group or groups. He intends to introduce a motion in respect of this.

Councillor Alford also made council aware of a consultation on a proposed Solar Battery Storage Site to the north of Whitley above Top Lane. The initial proposal from Lime Down Solar is a 500mw facility with 2000 acres of solar panels on a site near Hullavington and a cable running down to connect to the storage facility and another cable connecting to the Beanacre sub-station. This would obviously require a large-scale excavation and the storage facility itself would be very visible. The final decision would lie with the Secretary of State, not Wiltshire Council

Councillor Ellis asked about the height of the installation. Councillor Alford answered that the site would need to be excavated to provide a flat surface and it would be analogous to about 200 shipping containers.

Councillor Hubbard noted that details of mitigating landscaping proposals were not yet known.

Councillor Hubbard had also made approaches on behalf of the Melksham Pet Foodbank and expressed his disappointment that he had not been consulted.

732/23 CCTV Motion from Councillor Hubbard

Councillor Hubbard spoke to his motion, stressing that the system would not be constantly monitored but could be used by police as and when required for crime investigation. He thanked and credited former councillor Goodhind for his work on CCTV.

Councillor Aves expressed her support.

Questions were asked, as a result of which Councillor Hubbard confirmed the following.

- The feed from MTC mobile CCTV and other 3rd party systems can be incorporated. The issues with siting mobile CCTV were noted.
- Number plate recognition intended for crime investigation, not parking enforcement
- There will be no live monitoring. Equipment will be partitioned off to stop unauthorised viewing and access to video is already set out in CCTV policy.
- Training has been accounted for but the system is not very different from that currently in use
- The system has a capacity of 64 cameras but can be extended
- There is no annual fee for the software, which has long-term technical support and MTC already has a maintenance contract
- The quote includes all legal signage

Concerns were expressed about CCTV in residential areas. Councillor Hubbard advised that it was hoped the cameras could be angled to avoid private property but the software could redact footage if a camera does point at private property.

Councillor Ellis was concerned that members only received the motion the Friday before the meeting and it was not published online. Councillor Hubbard replied that the motion is intended to take forward the recommendations of the recent independent report.

It was proposed by Councillor Hubbard, seconded by Councillor Price and

RESOLVED

- To authorise the appointment of Kan Connections to undertake the works as set out in their quotation dated February 2024 to complete the works outlined

in the Independent Report previously received by Council and detailed in their quotation dated February 2024.

- That such works should cost no more than the £29,712 limit as indicated in the quotation supplied by the contractor.
- That such works to be undertaken and completed by end of May 2024
- That funding for this project is taken from the previous allocation of £50,000 for CCTV funding currently held in earmarked reserves.
- The remaining £20,288 of funds in the CCTV reserve is split with £10,000 remaining in the fund for future expansion of the system (such as the addition of CCTV for the underpass in the town estimated to cost an additional £3,000/4,000) and the remainder being released back to General Funds.

733/23 Sensory Garden Motion from Councillor Hubbard

Councillor Hubbard had not been able to complete work on his motion in time for this meeting.

734/23 Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk

Councillor Oatley expressed his concerns over omissions in the policy. Councillor Griffin advised that he had put the policy up for discussion and had not expected it to be adopted at this meeting.

It was proposed by Councillor Alford, seconded by Councillor Oatley and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that Councillor Griffin and Councillor Oatley form a Task Group to refine the policy

735/23 Communications Policy

Councillor Hubbard spoke on the proposed amendments. It was a work in progress and was intended to remove hurdles and empower authorised officers.

The following amendments to the policy were suggested and accepted.

- that the policy should say ‘Town Clerk, Authorised Officer and Town Mayor’.
- that the policy should be reviewed by April 2025

The Town Mayor Councillor S Crundell asked if officers could check if MTC insurance gives councillors the same protection as officers when issuing statements.

It was proposed by Councillor Hubbard and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to adopt the policy with the above amendments and that authorised officers be defined as Head of Operations, Communications & Events Officer, Communications Officer and Committee Clerk.

736/23 Financial Statements

The Town Mayor Councillor S Crundell referenced the Finance, Administration & Performance meeting of Monday 11 March 2024 and the work that is being undertaken as a result of that meeting.

737/23 Lloyds

The statements were received.

738/23 Unity

The statements were received.

739/23 Petty Cash

The statements were received.

740/23 Monthly Financial Statement

The statements were received.

741/23 Budget Report

Councillor Alford queried the following.

- Line 4042 Licences Software which is showing at 217% of budget. Councillor Hubbard advised that expenditure previously coded against other lines had been recoded to 4042.
- Line 1026 Income Interest showing significantly more than anticipated. Good news, but need to be more aware of expected interest.

The reports were received.

742/23 Income Report

The reports were received.

743/23 Earmarked Reserves

The reports were received.

744/23 Community Development Committee

The minutes were received.

745/23 Economic Development and Planning Committee

The minutes were received.

746/23 Staffing Committee

The minutes were received.

747/23 Events

The notes were received.

748/23 ECWG

The notes were received.

749/23 Neighbourhood Plan

Councillor Aves and Councillor Ellis gave an update.

The Town Mayor Councillor S Crundell asked if we are on schedule for referendum.

Yes. Work is continuing on logging comments and group considering effect of the changes to National Planning Policy Framework.

Councillor Hubbard raised the comments on budget made by Councillor Glover of Melksham Without Parish Council at the Finance, Administration and Performance on Monday 11 March 2024.

Councillor Aves was unable to confirm the situation but would check and report back.

Meeting Closed at: 8.41 pm

Signed:

Dated: