

Melksham Town Council

Minutes of the Finance, Administration and Performance Committee meeting held on Monday 9th September 2024

PRESENT: Councillor A Griffin (Chair)
Councillor C Stokes (Vice-Chair)
Councillor P Aves
Councillor J Hubbard
Councillor J Westbrook

IN ATTENDANCE:

OFFICERS:	Andrew Meacham	Committee Clerk
	Tracy Predeth	Locum Clerk
	Mel Rolph (via Zoom)	Finance Officer

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: One member of the public and one member of the press were present. Members of the public were present for grant applications as recorded in the individual minute item.

16/24 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Rabey.

17/24 Declarations of Interest

Councillor J Westbrook declared an interest in relation to the grant application from Melksham Community Larder. Councillor J Westbrook remained in the meeting and took part in the debate on this item but did not vote.

18/24 Public Participation

Joe McCann asked why there was no performance and project update. The Clerk advised that the Strategy Task & Finish Group was currently reviewing project priorities. Councillor Hubbard asked when the responsibility had been removed from this committee. Councillor Griffin stated that reports should come back to this committee but in the absence of a report nothing could be done that night. The Clerk advised that there was some confusion as in her experience of other councils, performance updates went to the relevant committee and that there may be some misunderstanding on the part of officers of the role of the Strategy Task & Finish Group.

Sue Mortimer.

Referencing agenda item 6. Is it appropriate or necessary for the Town Clerk and RFO to be signatories? Where are the segregation of duties? Segregation of Duties means

individuals who have responsibility of control of money must not be able to approve transactions. It is the responsibility of two councillors to approve transactions. The addition of these two signatures to the bank mandate was resolved at Finance meeting, which appears to be in breach of finance regs. Council banking arrangements, including the bank mandate, shall be made by the Town Clerk and approved by Council. Banking arrangements may not be delegated to a committee. How would the governance audit feel about this?

The Clerk answered that Council sets its budget every year and that is the authority to spend within that budget. Purchase orders are made, invoices come in and it is for the Town Clerk, RFO or Finance Officer to check that invoice against the order. Currently councillors are asked to come into the office to then also check. You have to remember that we run as a business with lots of transactions so it is a much quicker process and council had been criticised for the time taken to make payments. It is within the law that the Clerk or RFO can authorise payments. It then goes on to the banking system and is sent on for councillors to electronically approve payment. In a way there is a treble check with the finance officer loading the invoices, the Clerk or RFO checking and members authorising.

Sue suggested it would make more sense for invoices to be sent out for approval and authorisation of payment all in one go.

Councillor Griffin shared some of the concerns over potential absence of segregation of responsibilities. He would look back and ensure that if any revisions or amendments were required they would be enacted as soon as possible.

Councillor Hubbard noted the process described by the Clerk was not as set out in the minutes. It was resolved to add the Locum Town Clerk and Locum RFO to the bank mandate to be able to make payments, transfer and authorise payments. Councillor Griffin repeated that he intended to look at this. The Clerk advised that if she and the RFO were not on the bank mandate they would not be able to talk to the bank.

For clarity Councillor Hubbard stated that the documented process is that officers would put onto the system and then councillors would authorise but it is technically possible for officers to be able to make a payment from the council bank account without councillors being involved.

The Clerk stated it would always need a second member. Councillor Hubbard pointed out that it could be a second officer. The Clerk conceded this was possible. Councillor Hubbard made it clear that he was not suggesting any distrust of the current clerk and RFO but councillors needed to look at the process, not the people.

Councillor Griffin stated that what needed to be made clear was whether the documented process was compliant and whether the documented process was being followed.

Sue Mortimer then asked some questions that had been submitted to the RFO by email and responded to by the RFO

Q. Allotment 203 1045 Income Allotments Mth 3 £485 (page 99 of the Agenda Pack) Mth 4 (£165) (page 73 of Agenda Pack). What is the reason for the debit movement in month 4 of £650 on this code.

A. There was an error of entering income twice in the past and those entries have been reversed now

SM. These items also show as outstanding on the bank rec back in year end March 2024. Questions should have been asked why there were February 2024 receipts outstanding at the end of March.

Q. What was the amount £637,457 on code 1180 CIL received for? (mth 2 page 143 of Agenda Pack).

A. It is Sec 106 money £637,457.04 received for East of Melksham Development.

SM. CIL monies received need to be posted to an income code and a cost centre in the 400's. 901 should not be used.

Councillor Griffin asked if he could liaise with the RFO to come back with a more detailed explanation.

SM. Asked a question about PAYE showing a Debit balance. The RFO was looking into it.

Q. Historically, certainly in the time when I was a Councillor, I have not seen published a year end Statement of Account. The Statement of Account is a statutory document. Why has this not been done? The Statement of Account for category 2 authorities must take the form of an income and expenditure account and a statement of balances.

A. Melksham Town Council is not a category 2 authority.

SM. In her view Melksham Town Council is category 2.

SM had some comments on accounts and investments. Councillor Griffin thanked her but advised there would not be time that evening to go into detail. SM passed her written comments to the Chair, Councillor Griffin.

The Clerk acknowledged that SM was trying to be helpful but the number of questions was overwhelming, especially and she and the RFO were new to the council. She was aware of the investment issue and it was in hand.

19/24 Minutes

Councillor Hubbard raised the following

Minute 4/24. The 2nd sentence in the 2nd paragraph of item 4/24 was not complete. He requested an amendment so that the minutes noted that projects plans should be a standing item on the agenda with an update coming to each meeting.

Minute 8/24. Had the proposed rota for signing financial documents been created. It was confirmed that a rota had not been set up.

Minute 9/24. The item was still showing against an earmarked reserve and had not been moved to a spend code. Spends were still being recorded against reserves.

Subject to the amendment above, the minutes of 8th July 2024, having previously been circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by Councillor Griffin.

20/24 Grants

The committee clerk reminded members that the budget for the quarter was £4000 but £250 was earmarked for Wiltshire Mind, as per the resolution of 8th July 2024.

21/24 Melksham Community Larder

Adrienne Westbrook attended for the applicant.

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

RESOLVED to award Melksham Community Larder a grant of £112.50 for Assembly Hall room hire.

22/24 Melksham Foodbank

Melksham Foodbank was not represented. An email of apology had been sent but this was not known by the meeting.

It was proposed by Councillor Hubbard, seconded by Councillor J Westbrook and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to award Melksham Foodbank a grant of £700.00

23/24 Melksham Music Festival Ltd

Mark Stansby and Bruce Burry attended for the applicants.

It was proposed by Councillor Aves, seconded by Councillor J Westbrook and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to award Melksham Music Festival Ltd a grant of £180.00 for Assembly Hall room hire.

24/24 Wessex MS Therapy Centre

Sarah Folker attended for the applicants.

Councillor Hubbard sought clarity on the equipment and said that if future applications were made, he would like to see a discount for Melksham Town residents on the

voluntary donation per session. This would demonstrate to councillors that approving a grant would have a benefit for Melksham Town residents.

It was proposed by Councillor Griffin, seconded by Councillor Aves and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to award Wessex Multiple Sclerosis Therapy Centre a grant of £700.00.

Sarah Folker invited councillors to visit and see the group's work.

25/24 Youth Adventure Trust

Emily Ball attended for the applicants.

It was proposed by Councillor Hubbard, seconded by Councillor J Westbrook and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to award Youth Adventure Trust a grant of £249.00.

26/24 Splash - Community First Wiltshire

The applicants were not represented but had sent apologies.

There were concerns that this was a county wide project and there was insufficient information about the benefit to Melksham town residents. Other evidence is based on national figures. There is no evidence of the impact of the Splash programs in Wiltshire.

It was proposed by Councillor Stokes, seconded by Councillor J Westbrook and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to defer this application to the next meeting and for a representative of Splash (Community First Wiltshire) to attend the meeting to present evidence of outcomes.

27/24 Back on Track - Stroke Rehab Service

The applicants were not represented but had sent apologies.

There was discussion about the percentage of Melksham Town residents that would benefit.

It was proposed by Councillor Stokes, seconded by Councillor J Westbrook and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to award Back on Track – Stroke Rehab Service a grant of £1000.00.

28/24 Request for Confirmation of signatories for Unity Bank

This item was referred to Full Council.

29/24 Data Comms into the Town Hall

It was noted that this could be dealt with under delegated authority.

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

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to approve the installation of the additional line.

30/24 Financial Regulations 2024

Members had not had sufficient time to consider the document. It was agreed that members would take the document away and review before the Full Council meeting on Monday 23rd September.

31/24 Dates of meetings

Members discussed the dates, the need for budget meetings, the elections and the final quarters grants.

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

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED

- To move the Finance meeting on 6th January 2025 to 13th January 2025
- To move the Finance meeting on 3rd March 2025 to 10th March 2025 to allow the 4th quarter grant awards.
- To hold additional Finance meetings end of November and December 2024 for budget discussions.
- To recommend to Full Council that the Full Council meeting on 27th January 2025 be moved to 20th January 2025 for budget approval

32/24 Project Plans

The Committee Clerk gave a verbal update on CCTV and Avon War Memorial.

CCTV due for completion by the end of the month and on budget.

Avon War Memorial, co-ordinating availability of Richard, Tony Jones and a rep from Cooper Avon.

33/24 Income & Expenditure

Members expressed their dissatisfaction with the reports supplied and that concerns expressed on several occasions had not been addressed.

Members wanted to see monthly cash books for Lloyds, Unity and Petty Cash as well as the Income & Expenditure report and the balance sheet.

Councillor Hubbard pointed out that the council was legally required to publish transactions over £500 and having these statements on the published agenda was an easy way to satisfy this requirement.

Concerns were expressed about the breakdowns on the reserves and other coding.

It was agreed that Councillor Griffin and Councillor Hubbard would meet with the RFO and the Finance Office to discuss the concerns.

It was proposed by Councillor Griffin, seconded by Councillor Stokes and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to defer items 11 & 12 to the next meeting.

34/24 Balance Sheet

See 32/24.

Meeting Closed at: 9.20 pm

Signed:

Dated: