

Melksham Town Council

Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on Monday 22nd March 2021

PRESENT: Councillor P Aves (Town Mayor)
Councillor G Mitcham (Deputy Town Mayor)
Councillor S Brown
Councillor V Fiorelli
Councillor J Hubbard
Councillor K Iles
Councillor C Jeffries
Councillor M Pain
Councillor M Sankey
Councillor T Welch
Councillor A Westbrook
Councillor R Wiltshire

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE Sgt. J Twyford Wiltshire Police

OFFICERS: Linda Roberts Town Clerk
David McKnight Economic Development Manager
Patsy Clover Assistant to the Town Clerk

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: Two members of the public and three members of the press were present.

Councillor Westbrook posed a series of questions in response to a letter published in the Melksham Independent News.

1) It has been stated that the 9% proposed increase to the precept was suggested by a select group of councillors. Could you explain the process that you went through to arrive at this figure?

It was confirmed by the Town Clerk that the initial budget had been prepared based on the past year's outturn, current year's expenditure to date; any projects requested by the Council had been included. This had been a baseline budget which opened up the budget process for contributions by members.

2) Did any concerned councillor/s contact you to discuss the budget rise because it was felt to be too high in the current circumstances?

The Town Clerk advised that requests for input/suggestions from members had been made and that two members had been active

in their suggestions - Councillors Westbrook and Hubbard.

3) So, no other councillor contacted you to discuss the budget at all and to suggest savings?

The Town Clerk stated that this was the case.

4) How was the budget increase reduced from 9% to 2.9%?

It was advised by the Town Clerk that the budget was finally agreed at the budget setting meeting on 25 January 2021, following various revisions and taking on board suggestions made by councillors at council meetings.

5) Can you confirm that the next stage of the CCTV consultation is going ahead as agreed by last week's Asset Management meeting. The ultimate aim is to have a fully costed scheme that external funding can be applied for.

The Town Clerk confirmed that this had been agreed by council at their meeting on 1 March.

6) Can you confirm that there is money in the CCTV budget to undertake this piece of work.

The Town Clerk confirmed that there is no funding available in this year's budget. However, the use of the general reserve will enable the work to be completed sooner.

7) In order to protect the budget and the jobs of the council's staff, which councillor contacted the Town Clerk to ask her to investigate the use of the Job Retention Scheme for the Assembly Hall staff.

It was confirmed by the Town Clerk that contact had been made by Councillor Westbrook. However, officers were already researching the use of the scheme. The Town Clerk stated that the salaries' budget will be slightly underspent at the end of the current financial year.

Councillor Hubbard requested an update regarding the council's new website. The Assistant to the Town Clerk stated that it was hoped that the website would be launched by the end of March but that the Town Council was in the hands of the developers.

75/21 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Illman. Councillors Brown and Pain joined the meeting late due to technical difficulties.

Councillors Iles and Mitcham left the meeting at 9.30pm.

76/21 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

77/21 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2021, having previously been circulated, were approved as a correct record. It was agreed that these would be signed by the Town Mayor, Councillor Aves, at a later date.

78/21 Town Mayor's Announcements

The Town Mayor, Councillor Aves, informed members of the death of a former Mayor of Melksham, Maureen Weston, and expressed her condolences.

79/21 Police Report

Members received an update from Sgt. Twyford who reported that there had been a 25% reduction in crimes in Melksham over the last three months. Current local priorities included a doubling in the incidents of house parties and unlawful gatherings, speeding on Beanacre Road, Snowberry Lane and Sandridge Road and repeat offenders.

It was confirmed that outdoor skate parks could reopen on 29 March, based on current guidelines. However, at present, gatherings at the Melksham Skate Park are not a priority for Covid patrols. Fixed penalty notices for Covid breaches cannot be issued to the under-18s meaning that any incidents have to be dealt with by way of engagement and explanation with Anti Social Behaviour being addressed.

Sgt. Twyford will investigate the possibility of enforcement measures for speeding near the double mini roundabouts between Sandridge Road and Lowbourne.

80/21 Reports from Unitary Councillors

Members noted the update from Councillor Hubbard on matters affecting Melksham which had been discussed at Wiltshire Council meetings.

81/21 Accounts

.1 Payments

It was proposed by Councillor Aves, seconded by Councillor Mitcham, and:

RESOLVED to approve the list of payments circulated with the agenda pack.

.2 Monthly Financial Statement

The monthly financial statement was noted. The Town Clerk advised members that she had instigated a full audit of the Town Council's utility accounts.

.3 Detailed Income & Expenditure Report Jan-Feb 2021

The detailed income and expenditure report was noted.

82/21 2021/2022 Budget Review

It was noted that the Town Clerk/RFO will carry out a budget review in the first quarter of the 2021/2022 financial year to establish whether some of the projects put on hold can be started.

83/21 Transfer of the Town Council's Bank Accounts

The report of the Assistant to the Town Clerk was received. Although Councillor Hubbard raised concerns about the costs of banking with Unity Trust Bank, it was felt that the poor service provided by the Cooperative Bank and the difficulties encountered outweighed any benefits from free banking.

It was proposed by Councillor Westbrook, seconded by the Town Mayor, Councillor Aves, and:

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to delegate to the Town Clerk to open a business current account with Unity Trust Bank, considering the need for a feeder account, and then to transfer the Council's accounts with the Cooperative Bank to Unity Trust Bank. Consideration to transferring the remaining Lloyds Bank account to Unity Trust Bank would be given at a later date. The Town Clerk would also be given delegated powers to review and undertake the investment of surplus funds, as appropriate.

84/21 Committee Minutes

.1 Finance and Administration Committee

The minutes of the Finance and Admin Committee meeting held on 8 March 2021 were received.

Clarification was provided regarding the differences in the proposed grant application process for larger 'red circled' grants and smaller grants. The Town Clerk confirmed that the value of any grants for room hire would be accounted for in the Council's accounts by virement between budget headings. She also explained that a requirement of receiving a grant would be to give a presentation at

the Council's Annual Meeting talking about how the grant had been utilised and emphasised the fact that the new process would enable officers to support groups with their applications and provide guidance about alternative funding sources.

It was proposed by Councillor Hubbard, seconded by the Town Mayor, Councillor Aves, and:

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to adopt the new Grant Funding Policy and Application process and to delegate authority to the Finance and Administration Committee to approve smaller grants at each meeting throughout the year with a cap of £2,500 per application.

.2 Economic Development and Planning Committee

The minutes of the Economic Development and Planning Committee meetings held on 11 January 2021, 26 January 2021, 16 February 2021 and 9 March 2021 were received.

.3 Community Development Committee

The minutes of the Community Development Committee meeting held on 22 February 2021 were received.

85/21 Sub Committee Minutes

.1 King George V Sub-Committee

The minutes of the King George V Sub-Committee meeting held on 17 February 2021 were noted.

Councillor Hubbard expressed his concerns that members were being asked to agree to something without full knowledge of the facts. The Town Clerk explained that the tender process had been comprehensive and that five expressions of interest had been received with one tender returned.

After some discussion, it was agreed to move the item to confidential session later in the meeting.

The Town Clerk advised members that although the contractor for the play area had provided a pathway in accordance with the tender, it was not fit for purpose; the loose gravel surface could cause damage to the equipment and to the Splash Pad.

It was proposed by Councillor Westbrook, seconded by Councillor Fiorelli and:

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to delegate to the Town Clerk to use up to £5,000 from solar farm receipts and CIL income to install a resin bonded pathway, whilst seeking to recoup a proportion of the costs from the surveyor and/ or contractor.

.2 HR Sub Committee

The minutes of the HR Sub Committee meetings held on 13 January 2021, 29 January 2021, 10 February 2021 and 23 February 2021 were received. Councillor Mitcham requested that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 February be amended to reflect the fact that he chaired the meeting.

A discussion took place regarding the requirement for elected members to withdraw from a committee meeting should it go into confidential session. The Town Clerk confirmed that legislation dictated that members not appointed to a committee had no more rights than members of the public.

Councillor Hubbard referred to paragraphs 77 and 78 of the NALC guidance which suggested that staffing committees may benefit from additional Standing Orders. He requested that the Town Clerk update Standing Orders before the Annual Meeting to reflect the mechanism put in place by the Council.

The recommendation for a Video File Policy made by the HR Sub Committee at their meeting on 29 January was discussed. The Town Clerk stated that the only true record of a meeting were the minutes, once signed. It was good practice to delete all recordings for all committee meetings, including YouTube recordings, once the minutes had been approved.

It was proposed by the Town Mayor, Councillor Aves, seconded by Councillor Fiorelli and:

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to delegate the creation of a draft Video File Policy to the Town Clerk, for further discussion by Full Council once prepared.

86/21 Working Groups

.1 CCTV Working Group

The notes of the CCTV Working Group meetings held on 12 January 2021 and 23 February 2021 were received.

87/21 CCTV Working Group Membership

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

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to approve the membership of councillors and co-opted members of the public onto the CCTV Working Group, as follows:

Councillor representatives from the four wards in Melksham town
Teresa Strange, Clerk, Melksham Without Parish Council
Councillor John Glover, Melksham Without Parish Council
Councillor Stefano Patacchiola, Melksham Without Parish Council
Councillor Jonathon Seed, Chair, Melksham Area Board
Councillor Phil Alford, Melksham Area Board
Councillor Pat Aves, Melksham Area Board
Councillor Nick Holder, Melksham Area Board
Councillor Jon Hubbard, Melksham Area Board
Councillor Hayley Spencer, Melksham Area Board
Peter Dunford, Community Engagement Manager, Melksham
Chris Pickett, Melksham Older People's Champion
Nick Westbrook, Chair, West Wilts Police Independent Advisory Group [IAG]
Dee Atkinson, Secretary, Melksham Pub Watch
Inspector Gill Hughes, Wiltshire Police
PC Lee Pelling, Wiltshire Police
Sgt. James Twyford, Wiltshire Police
Tom Ridley – Tactical Crime Prevention Officer, Wiltshire Police
Amanda Clarke Design Out Crime Officer, Wiltshire Police

88/21 CCTV Working Group Terms of Reference

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

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to approve the Terms of Reference for the CCTV Working Group.

89/21 Neighbourhood Plan

An update from Town Council representatives on the Steering Group was received. It was noted that the Neighbourhood Plan was in the process of being reviewed by the Examiner, before proceeding to the Referendum stage.

90/21 Melksham Town Council Policies

Discussion took place regarding the acceptable use of emails and social media by councillors and the need for councillors to be protected from bullying and harassment. Councillor Hubbard suggested that the Code of Conduct was the proper forum for some of the issues under discussion. The Town Clerk reminded

members that she had circulated the LGA Code of Conduct and would review this. The consensus was that the policies should be adopted but could be built upon. It was proposed by Councillor Hubbard, seconded by Councillor Westbrook and

RESOLVED to approve the following policies:

- Acceptable use of email, tablets and internet for Councillors policy, subject to the addition of guidance to ensure protection from bullying
- Audio recording, Filming and Photography Policy
- Communication Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Data Security Breach Policy
- Mobile Phone Policy
- Pre-Application Policy for Major Development Projects

91/21 The Spiritualist Garden

The report of the Economic Development Manager was received, with two key issues being cited; the right of access across the unclassified public highway leading to the garden and ownership of the wall between the garden and 16 King Street.

It was proposed by Councillor Wiltshire, seconded by the Town Mayor, Councillor Aves and:

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to instruct the Council's solicitor to effect the transfer of the ownership of the Spiritualist Garden to the Town Council.

92/21 Future Audio Visual Requirements for Town Council Meetings

The report of the Economic Development Manager was received. The need for a wireless microphone system with cameras was accepted due to the flexibility it would provide. This type of system would mean that the need for a dedicated meeting room could be avoided. It was noted that the cost of such a system would be met from reserves.

The benefits of meeting in person were emphasised, especially for newly elected councillors. However, it was recognised that physical meetings may cause difficulties in accommodating members of the public.

It was proposed by Councillor Hubbard, seconded by Councillor Sankey and:

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to delegate the purchase of a wireless system with batteries, chargers, cameras and video capture to the Town Clerk for a maximum budget of £28,000 through an appropriate procurement process whilst

recognising that the equipment, particularly the microphones, will need to be installed as soon as possible.

93/21 Parking Redemption Scheme

The report of the Economic Development Manager was received.

The need for more wider spread advertising of the scheme was discussed with the possibility of acquiring bigger attention-grabbing signs. The Economic Development Manager felt that retailers also needed to invest in the scheme by 'selling' it to their customers as part of the package to reopen the town centre post Lockdown Three. Councillor Fiorelli suggested that stallholders at town centre markets could be invited to join the scheme.

It was proposed by Councillor Hubbard, seconded by Councillor Welch and:

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to continue with the Parking Redemption Scheme in 2021/2022 and to increase marketing of the project through increased signage and advertisements.

94/21 Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs)

The report of the Locum Admin. Assistant was received.

It was proposed by Councillor Hubbard, seconded by Councillor Aves and:

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to approve the use of earmarked reserves to purchase seven replacement SIDs for an amount not exceeding the original purchase price.

95/21 Deferral of Movement Working Group Consultation

It was proposed by Councillor Hubbard, seconded by Councillor Aves and:

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to defer the Movement Working Group consultation until after the May elections.

96/21 Community Infrastructure Levy

The resolution made by Melksham Without Parish Council at their meeting on 25 January 2021 regarding the transfer of CIL monies from the Hunters Wood/ The Acorns development was noted.

97/21 Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority - Draft Community Safety Plan 2021-2024 Consultation

It was noted that members can take part in the consultation.

98/21 Confidential Session

It was proposed by the Town Mayor, Councillor Aves and:

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that in view of the sensitive nature of the business to be transacted, the public and press be instructed to withdraw from the meeting.

99/21 East of Melksham Community Centre

The report prepared by the Assistant to the Town Clerk, specifically the ongoing lack of cooperation from the developers' agents, was noted. Concerns were raised about the suitability of the locations being proposed for the community centre and the residents who would benefit.

It was proposed by Councillor Westbrook, seconded by Councillor Fiorelli and:

RESOLVED to request that David Sharp of BTA Architects be engaged to prepare a full plan so that a full planning application may be submitted to Wiltshire Council for a community centre based on the Berryfields design and located at the Town Council's preferred location and also to request the transfer of the S106 funds being held by Wiltshire Council for the building of the community centre to Melksham Town Council.

100/21 King George V Park

The Town Clerk provided further information regarding the tender process, financial considerations and the provision/use of facilities in answer to Councillor Hubbard's concerns.

It was proposed by Councillor Westbrook, seconded by Councillor Fiorelli and:

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to appoint Tony Hickman to operate the Cricketers Café at King George V Park under terms agreed between the Town Council and their solicitor.

101/21 New Lease 31 Market Place

The Town Clerk explained that the previous lease had lapsed about 12 years ago. The tenant of 31 Market Place was happy with the terms of the new lease and the proposed rent. It was confirmed that the fabric of the building was the responsibility of the Town Council whereas the interior of the property was the responsibility of the tenant.

It was proposed by Councillor Hubbard, seconded by Councillor Welch and:

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to approve the lease for 31 Market Place.

Meeting Closed at: 10.02 pm

Signed:

Dated: