



# Public Document Pack

## Melksham Town Council

Town Hall, Melksham, Wiltshire, SN12 6ES  
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Town Clerk and RFO Linda Roberts BA(Hons) PGCAP, FHEA,  
FLSCC

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

19 March 2021

Dear Councillors

In accordance with the Local Government Act (LGA) 1972, Sch 12, paras 10 (2)(b) you are invited to attend the **Full Council** meeting of the Melksham Town Council. The meeting will be held at the Via Zoom on **Monday 22nd March 2021** commencing at **7.00 pm**. A period of public participation will take place in accordance with Standing Order 3(F) prior to the formal opening of the meeting. The Press and Public are welcome to attend this meeting.

Yours sincerely

Mrs L A Roberts BA(Hons), PGCAP, FHEA, FSLCC  
Town Clerk and RFO

**Full Council  
Melksham Town Council**

**Monday 22 March 2021  
At 7.00 pm at the Via Zoom**

**Public Participation** – To receive questions from members of the public.

*In the exercise of Council functions. Members are reminded that the Council has a general duty to consider Crime & Disorder, Health & Safety, Human Rights and the need to conserve biodiversity. The Council also has a duty to tackle discrimination, provide equality of opportunity for all and foster good relations in the course of developing policies and delivery services under the public sector Equality Duty and Equality 2010.*

**AGENDA**

**10.1 King George V Sub-Committee** (Pages 1 - 4)

To receive the minutes of the King George V Sub-Committee meeting held on 17 February 2021 and to consider the recommendation on the appointment of a contractor to operate the Cricketers Café.

**11.3 CCTV Working Group Terms of Reference** (Pages 5 - 10)

To receive and approve the CCTV Working Group Terms of Reference.

**14. The Spiritualist Garden - Report of the Economic Development Manager** (Pages 11 - 14)

Progress on the acquisition of the Spiritualist Garden. (To Follow).

**15. Future Audio Visual Requirements for Town Council Meetings** (Pages 15 - 18)

To receive the report from the Economic Development Manager and consider the recommendations therein. (To follow)

**16. Parking Redemption Scheme - Report of the Economic Development Manager** (Pages 19 - 22)

Report on the roll out of the parking redemption scheme for the financial year 2020/2021. Members are requested to consider an extension of the parking redemption scheme for the Financial Year 2021/2022. (To Follow)

## Melksham Town Council

### Minutes of the King George V Sub-Committee meeting held on Wednesday 17th March 2021

**PRESENT:** Councillor A Westbrook (Chair)  
Councillor K Iles  
Councillor G Mitcham  
Councillor T Watts  
Councillor T Welch

**IN ATTENDANCE** Jack Raisey, Artist  
Councillor P Aves  
Councillor V Fiorelli

**OFFICERS:** Linda Roberts Town Clerk  
Hugh Davies Amenities Manager  
Christine Hunter Committee Clerk  
Miriam Zaccarelli Community Development Officer

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:** No members of the public were present, but one member of the press was present.

#### 14/21 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jeffries and Councillor Brown who was substituted by Councillor Welch.

#### 15/21 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 16/21 Minutes

The minutes of 17 February 2021 having previously been circulated, were approved as a correct record. It was agreed that these would be signed at a later date by the Chair, Councillor Westbrook.

#### 17/21 Sensory Garden Art Sculpture - Revised Costings

Jack Raisey confirmed the increased cost of the art sculpture was due to the loss of economies of scale.

It was proposed by Councillor Westbrook, seconded by Councillor Watts and

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to approve the increased cost of £4,000 to purchase the art sculpture.

#### **18/21 Cricketers' Cafe Tenders**

The Amenities Manager confirmed that the closing date for the Cricketers' Café tenders had been 12 March 2021. Additional clarification had been sought from one applicant who was aware refurbishment needed to follow the theme of the building's previous history as a cricket pavilion. The Town Council would have input into trading hours, pricing structure and menu choices. A minimum income will be agreed with the successful applicant, to be reviewed on a regular basis. The successful applicant would have to attend a three-day Splash Pad training course on 29 March 2021. The opening of the Cricketers' Café should link-in with the Splash Pad opening on 12 April 2021.

It was proposed by Councillor Westbrook, seconded by Councillor and

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that Tony Hickman be recommended to Full Council as the preferred contractor to run the Cricketers Café in King George V Park.

#### **19/21 Recent Works Undertaken at the King George V Park**

The Amenities Manager confirmed that:

- Works had been undertaken on two trees in the park. A decision would be required in September to consider whether to remove two blossom trees near the sensory garden.
- Idverde had been contacted regarding their vehicles driving unnecessarily in the park and the damage being caused.
- The 800<sup>th</sup> Charter benches and picnic tables will be installed shortly.

Councillor Fiorelli suggested putting recycling bins in the new play area.

#### **20/21 Splash Pad Recommissioning**

The Amenities Manager confirmed that the Splash Pad will be recommissioned and staff trained on 5 April 2021

#### **21/21 King George V Park Electrical Works**

The Amenities Manager confirmed that he was waiting for two contractors to provide recommendations and quotes for two options for the electrical works required.

#### **22/21 Formation of a Friends of King George V Park Group**

Councillor Westbrook confirmed there had previously been a Friends of King George V Park Group. The Town Clerk stated the formation of a group would give people ownership and

enable them to be more engaged in the park. It was agreed that the Town Clerk and Community Development Officer produce a Terms of Reference and seek members to form a Friends of King George V Park Group.

#### **23/21 Motion for Dogs Off Lead Area with Dog Agility Equipment**

Councillor Fiorelli stated that using the fenced off area for a dogs off lead/dog agility area would help showcase the park. There may be opportunities to obtain funding/sponsorship for the provision of the dog agility equipment.

The Town Clerk suggested that a feasibility study be undertaken.

The Amenities Manager raised concerns about maintenance of the area and encouraging dog owners to clean up after their dogs. The Committee suggested having dog poo bags available from the Cricketers' Café.

It was proposed by Councillor Westbrook, seconded by Councillor Watts and

#### **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to**

- request the Amenities Manager to work to move the project forward.
- investigate by-laws regarding dogs off the lead in parks.
- remove fencing from the old dog compound at the same time the new dog compound is opened.
- carry out a feasibility study to highlight the pros and cons to inform the Friends of King George V Park Group.
- ask the Friends of King George V Park Group to produce a project to fund the dog agility equipment.

#### **24/21 Newspaper Social Media Comments**

Newspaper and social media comments were noted.

#### **25/21 Grand Opening of Park**

It was agreed to hold a celebration Grand Opening of King George V Park event on 26/27 June 2021.

The Town Clerk proposed holding an annual event day during the school holidays to celebrate King George V Park, such as a barbeque, a teddy bears picnic etc.

Councillor Westbrook thanked the committee for their work in improving the King George V Park.

Meeting Closed at: 8.07 pm

Signed: .....

Dated:

DRAFT



## **Melksham Town Council CCTV Working Group**

### **Terms of Reference**

1. Reporting to the Asset Management Committee. The Working Group will meet on an 'as required' basis.

2. **Membership**

The make-up of this Working Group shall consist of a minimum of 3 members of Melksham Town Council, one of whom shall be the chair. Any other members can be appointed and so can non-elected members of the public or any other representative from a properly constituted body. Nominated representatives of Melksham Without Parish Council, the Melksham Area Board and the Community Engagement Manager for Melksham will automatically be invited to attend Working Group meetings.

3. **Delegated Business**

The Working Group has delegated authority to discuss and debate items as specified by a brief from the parent committee.

- 3.1 No working group shall have powers to make decisions on policy or budget commitment.
- 3.2 Recommendations shall be put before the relevant parent committee or full council for ratification.
- 3.3 Agendas shall be put together by the lead officer in conjunction with the Chair.
- 3.5 Notes of the Working Groups will be received at Town Council meetings. They will be prepared by the lead officer.

- 3.6 The Terms of Reference can be reviewed by the Working Group and recommended to the parent Committee for adoption by full council.



## **Melksham Town Council**

### **Minutes of the Asset Management Committee meeting held on Monday 15th March 2021**

**PRESENT:** Councillor T Watts (Chair)  
Councillor P Aves  
Councillor V Fiorelli  
Councillor G Mitcham

**IN  
ATTENDANCE** Councillor T Welch

**OFFICERS:** Linda Roberts  
Christine Hunter  
David McKnight  
Hugh Davies

Town Clerk  
Committee Clerk  
Economic Development Manager  
Amenities Manager

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:** One member of the public and one member of the press were present.

#### **1/21 Apologies**

There were no apologies

#### **2/21 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **3/21 Minutes**

Councillor Hubbard requested that “apologies” in the minutes of 14 December 2020 be amended to record that he and Councillor Aves were at an Area Board meeting. Councillor Welch requested her attendance at the meeting be noted. Following the requested amendments the minutes were approved as a correct record and would be signed at a later date by the Chair, Councillor Watts.

#### **4/21 CCTV Working Group Update**

**.1 CCTV Working Group Notes 7 December 2020 and 12 January 2021**

## **.2 CCTV Working Group Terms of Reference and Membership**

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

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to recommend the membership of the Working Group to Full Council for approval.

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

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that the CCTV Working Group Terms of Reference be amended to state that membership of the group will have no less than three town councillors, one of whom must be chair. Other members of a professional capacity or expertise could be appointed as appropriate. Nominated representatives of Melksham Without Parish Council, Melksham Area Board, including the ~~and the~~ Community Engagement Manager, have automatic places on the working group.

### **5/21 King George V Park Maintenance Shed Update**

The Amenities Manager reported that the architect was working on detailed drawings in readiness for the submission of the planning application. The drawings and proposals would be presented to council for approval before being submitted for planning permission.

### **6/21 Water Refill Station Progress Report**

The report of the Locum Admin Assistant was noted.

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

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that the Committee adopt the following recommendations contained within the Water Refill Station report:

- To await receipt of legal documents
- To agree a site visit
- To agree the installation date
- To consider COVID-19 risks associate with the waterpoint

### **7/21 Phone Boxes Update**

The report of the Business Administration Apprentice was noted.

It was proposed by Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor Fiorelli and

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that the Amenities Manager arrange for the phone boxes to be cleaned and painted and any decision on their use should be deferred until after the May 2021 elections.

**8/21 Residents Tree Planting Scheme**

The Economic Development Manager confirmed that Melksham Without Parish Council had expressed an interest in joining the scheme, but had suggested the scheme be deferred until the Autumn and next Spring.

Councillor Westbrook reported on the National Trust scheme for planting blossom trees in towns.

It was proposed by Councillor Watts, with a friendly amendment by Councillor Hubbard and

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that the Residents Tree Planting Scheme be deferred until the Autumn of 2020 and the Spring of 2021, and that the National Trust Scheme offering free flowering trees is investigated.

Meeting Closed at: 7.53 pm

Signed: .....

Dated:

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## MELKSHAM TOWN COUNCIL

### FULL COUNCIL MEETING

**22 MARCH 2021**

**Report: Proposed Acquisition: The Spiritualists' Church – Friends' Garden - off King Street, Melksham**

#### **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 At an Extraordinary Meeting of Full Council on 14 September 2020, councillors considered and approved a draft brief to the Council's solicitor [Mr Keith Taylor, Wellers Hedley] regarding their areas of concern in respect of the acquisition of The Spiritualist's Church – Friends' Garden - off King Street, Melksham. A Location Map and Digital Replication of the Definitive Highway Record (Wiltshire Council) is enclosed in **Appendix 1**.
- 1.2 The Council's solicitor has considered this matter. His comments were reproduced in their entirety in a report to this council on 16 November 2020.

#### **2 ISSUES IDENTIFIED**

Councillors discussed the issues identified and their implications at the Council Meeting on 16 November:

- 2.1 There is no declaration of liability for the wall between the garden and No 16 King Street so this issue is not completely resolved. The considered likely outcome then, remains so now, perhaps with a greater degree of certainty, is that it is a party wall repairable as such. Our solicitor cautioned that such an obligation would be difficult to enforce though unless the lack of repair threatens the structure of the wall.
- 2.2 The key risk to the Council was identified as being the access to the Garden over the accessway adjoining No 10 King Street. The land is not registered and it is therefore difficult to establish the true owner. There is no mention of the right of way in the title to No 10. This right of way needs to be established in case objections to usage are raised when the property becomes a public asset (with potentially higher rates of use). There is no access to the garden other than through the gate on to the lane. Our current use of the access lane is pedestrian and vehicular, although the access to the garden is pedestrian only (with small garden machinery) due to the size of the gate.

### 3 RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

- 3.1 The ownership of the access lane cannot be determined but investigations with Wiltshire Council have determined that is an unclassified public highway, from King Street as far as the last garage block, as per the screenshot map (with the red hatched area denoting publicly maintained highway). See **Appendix 1** – the hatched area of this Wiltshire Council Highways Plan indicates the area covered by the public right of way.
- 3.2 The plan in **Appendix 1** is a digital replication of the definitive Highway record, which is held at County Hall, so this council should not scale or make binding decisions or assumptions from it. It is intended as a guidance tool for Council Staff who work remotely from the main data centre.
- 3.3 The fact that it is public highway does not however denote ownership, indeed the ownership layer of the Wiltshire Council mapping system shows this road as blank indicating that this authority is likely not to be the owners of the land.
- 3.4 The author has been advised by a Wiltshire Council Highways Technician, in writing, that Wiltshire Council, as the local Highway Authority, routinely inspects this lane for safety defects to ensure that it remains safe and passable. There has been an alteration to the inspection regime recently and this unclassified road is now subject to an annual walked inspection rather than six monthly. There is no duty upon the highway authority to improve a road's condition, only to ensure it is safe and passable. Wiltshire Council demonstrates its compliance with that duty through its routine safety inspections, and its prompt assessment of any public concerns.
- 3.5 The author has also been advised, again in writing by a Wiltshire Council Highways Technician that where the public highway abuts an owner's land, that owner has the right to apply for an access onto their land. This is of course subject to planning, highways and conservation officer approval.
- 3.6 However, an access from the lane into the Friends' Garden already exists and this is a historic right of public access. Wiltshire Council acknowledges this. Should Melksham Town Council, as the new owner of the land, wish to amend the opening though, the considerations in 3.5 above will apply.
- 3.7 Wiltshire Council also advises that for so long as the lane has highway rights over it then, the owner of the Friends' Garden will have a right to access the garden within that highway extent. Any request to stop up those highway rights would require public consultation and the consent of all interested parties.
- 3.8 The status of the wall between No. 16 King Street and the Friends Garden cannot be absolutely determined but it is considered likely to be a party wall as discussed at the full council meeting of this council on 16 November 2020. The solicitor representing the trustees also holds this view and one of the historic plans supplied has this hand annotated on it.

### 4 RESOURCES AND BUDGET

- 4.1 This Council's solicitor, Roger Taylor of Wellers Law Group, advises that 'to cover advice to date through to registration of the transfer to the Council I would propose a fee of £850 plus VAT, Land Registry and search fees not exceeding £75'.
- 4.2 It is recommended that this fee, if approved, should be levied against the 2021/22 budget code 110/4050 (legal fees).

## 5 RISKS

- 5.1 The solicitor for the trustees of the Friends Garden has raised concerns on behalf of the trustees regarding the time it has taken for this transaction to be considered.

*"It is now of great importance to my clients that the garden is transferred to Melksham Town Council and remains for the benefit of the Melksham residents. My clients are not in a position to continue to maintain the land due to health reasons and one of the trustees being many many miles away.*

*"If Melksham Town Council are not in a position to take forward this land transfer, we must be informed as a matter of urgency as my clients will need to have a look at other avenues for gifting the land."*

## 6 RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 That Melksham Town Council's solicitor is asked to review the documents supplied to him by the author, and if considered satisfactory, to proceed in acquiring the Friends' garden for the Council.

## 7 CONTACT

**David McKnight**

Economic Development Manager

[david.mcknight@melksham-tc.gov.uk](mailto:david.mcknight@melksham-tc.gov.uk)

07759 284 266



## MELKSHAM TOWN COUNCIL

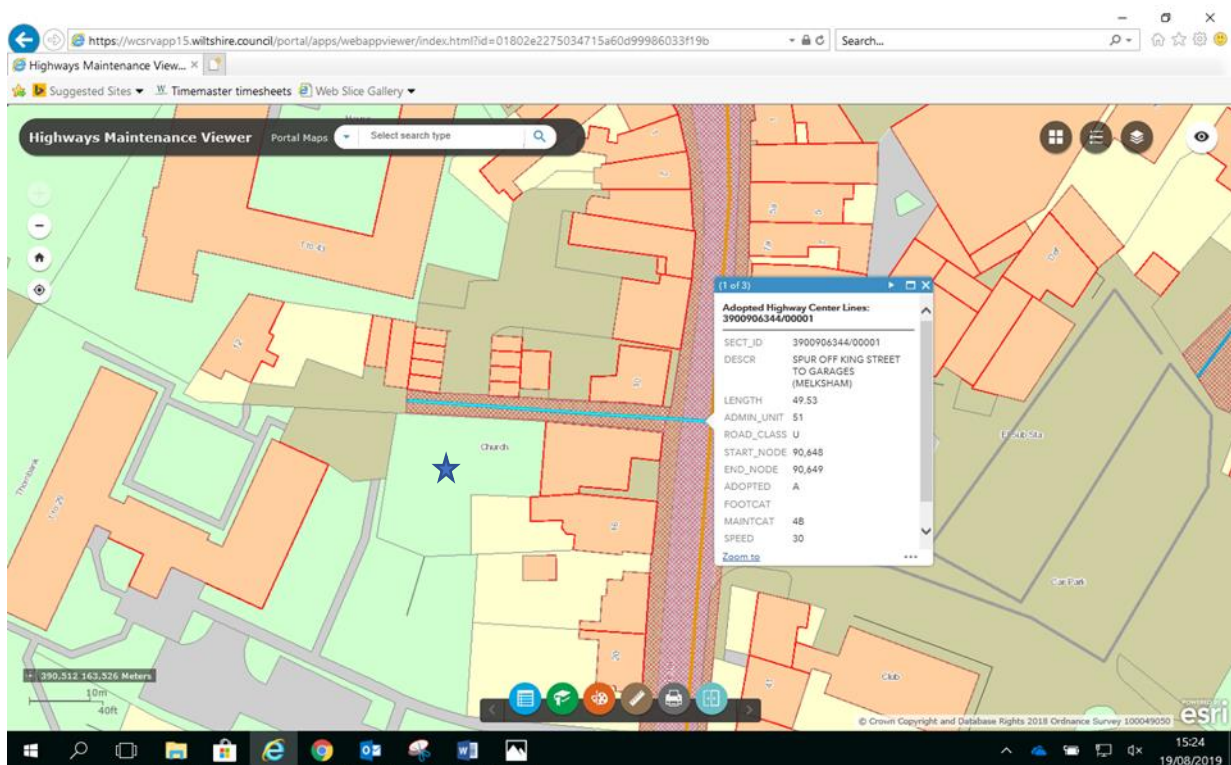
### FULL COUNCIL MEETING

22 MARCH 2021

**Report: Proposed Acquisition: The Spiritualists' Church – Friends' Garden - off King Street, Melksham**

#### APPENDIX 1

Location Map ★ and Digital Replication of the Definitive Highway Record – Wiltshire Council







## MELKSHAM TOWN COUNCIL

### FULL COUNCIL MEETING

**22 MARCH 2021**

#### **Report: AUDIO VISUAL REQUIREMENTS TO STREAM PHYSICAL MEETINGS ONTO YOUTUBE**

##### **1 BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 One of the benefits arising from the current pandemic and the various associated lockdowns has been the increased engagement of people with local governance, where local councils have streamed their meetings live onto YouTube.
- 1.2 Melksham Town Council has its own YouTube channel for this and other public engagement purposes.
- 1.3 It is not uncommon for meetings of this Council to attract views figures numbers of between 50 and 150. Whilst these figures in themselves are not very high, they are considerably higher than the numbers of people we may have reasonably expected to attend meetings in person.
- 1.4 The use of this technology also facilitates easier cooperation between Melksham Town Council and Melksham Without Parish Council as officers and members can see and hear the discussions which have taken place in respective meetings, asynchronously, removing the need to attend in person – something which often is not possible anyway, due to clashes in meeting diaries.
- 1.5 The use of virtual meetings and video streaming technologies, plus editing software has resulted in beneficial upskilling of staff in this regard, which positively impacts on our work in other areas.

##### **2 CORONAVIRUS 2020 ACT**

- 2.1 Under powers introduced in the Coronavirus 2020 Act (the Local Authorities Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) Flexibility of Local Authorities and Crime Panels Meetings (England and Wales) Regulations 2020), council meetings are currently being held remotely. The ability to meet in this way, unless actively extended, will lapse at midnight on 6 May this year.
- 2.2 Broadly, the 2020 Regulations in 2.1 above enable local council meetings, committee and sub-committee meetings to be held remotely (including by video and telephone conferencing platforms) until (and including) 6 May 2021.
- 2.3 At the time of writing, no extension to the 2020 Regulations has been notified, although requests are being made. The following links to a question in the House, and response provided, on this matter: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-24/158018>

- 2.4 If the provisions of the 2020 Regulations referred to in 2.1 above are not extended, this council will be unable to hold council meetings, committee and sub-committee meetings remotely from 7 May 2021.

### **3 DETAILS**

- 3.1 During the pandemic, this council has been holding virtual meetings by Zoom, and live streaming some of our meetings from Zoom onto our YouTube channel.
- 3.2 This is something there is interest in continuing, given the enhanced levels of public engagement the town council has experienced, even when we're able to meet physically in the Town Hall or one of our other buildings.
- 3.3 Currently for our meetings we share 8 x Bosch CCS 800 Ultro LLB 3330/00 units and need their built in Digital Acoustic Feedback Suppression feature which prevents feedback sound interference from one microphone to another. This will not be sufficient in number for use in physical meetings under current coronavirus regulations because every member and officer will need their own microphone to avoid the need for time consuming sanitisation between speakers and the need to move microphones between people who will be seated 2m apart.
- 3.4 Moving forward, assuming we start to meet physically whilst pandemic social distancing restrictions are still in place, our technology requirements will change:
- 3.4.1 we will need a total of 22 microphone units, so that every attendee has their own for COVID security plus a couple for public use.  
[15 councillors, Town Clerk, Committee Clerk, 2-3 staff members presenting reports plus 2 for members of the public who may wish to speak]
- 3.4.2 we will need to use foam windshields on every microphone as a COVID barrier (we will need to change them after every speaker and quarantine them for 3 days after the meeting. So, for 22 microphones, we're looking at about 80 plus windshields to allow for a 72 hour non-use quarantine period. We will also need to be able to sanitise the microphone case and push to talk button between every speaker. This will be a resource issue particularly during the public participation part of meeting proceedings.
- 3.4.3 we will need to combine audio with a camera input. Ideally cameras need to focus on the speakers as they alternate during the meeting. You Tube is a video medium so imagery is important. Such cameras will not be cheap and may need some manual finessing during the meeting. This will be an additional task for officers at meetings.
- 3.4.4 set the system to stream audio and video live onto YouTube and be able to switch off the live stream at the end of the meeting or if there are confidential items under discussion.
- 3.4.5 the system needs to be portable as we may need to move from room to room, or building to building, at least until the COVID restrictions, particularly those in respect of social distancing, are lifted. Also, our rooms are multi-purpose currently, so would need to be cleared between council meetings to allow use for other purposes.

### **4 TECHNICAL AND RESOURCE ISSUES**

- 4.1 Our existing Bosch microphone system is obsolete – it uses analogue technology whereas current units are digital – this means they cannot be combined, nor the existing central controller utilised. To extend the microphone capacity, a completely new system will be required.
- 4.2 We know the Digital Acoustic Feedback Suppression functionality on our existing Bosch units works well to counteract acoustic feedback. This will be vitally important

- to us in a physical meeting setting, and this confers confidence in the Bosch technology, which is also available on their new digital microphone systems.
- 4.3 The time taken to set up and strip out equipment and undertake quarantine procedures will be greater than for physical meetings using current equipment. There will be a need for staff training.
- 4.4 Troubleshooting problems may prove more challenging.

## 5 INDICATIVE COSTS

- 5.1 Public-I, a Bosch distribution partner has indicated, following discussions with Bosch, that:
- 5.1.1 The suggested value solution for us is a wired DCN 1000 microphone system which includes a 'push to talk' button, and free camera tracking. This does not include an electronic voting system.
- 5.1.2 It is anticipated that 2 cameras will be required, subject to survey. Cameras are expensive, so the council may need to consider reconfiguring its standard meeting room setup to avoid the need for a third camera.
- 5.1.3 A price guide to install 22 microphone/speaker units wired with camera tracking, controllers, 2 cameras and video capture would be **around £19,800 + VAT.**
- 5.1.4 We will also need a laptop to control the system. Also, possibly a flight case to store all the equipment, transport it and protect it from damage, depending on whether the installation is permanent or not.
- 5.2 For information and comparison, a guide price for a wireless system with batteries, chargers, cameras and video capture would be **around £28,800 + VAT.**

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 As a cost economy measure, consideration could be given to streaming audio files only onto YouTube and use a photographic or graphic image as the backdrop and no video content. However, it should be remembered that YouTube is a medium designed primarily for video and the stream of an audio file over a static image is likely to be less compelling.
- 6.2 A further cost economy measure for consideration would be to defer the streaming of audio/video to YouTube to a time when social distancing and sanitisation are no longer required and therefore a reduced number of microphone units and less staff input would be required. However, there is a risk that the public engagement momentum would be reduced.
- 6.3 A combination of economy measures 6.1 and 6.2 is likely to result in the cheapest technical option.

## 7 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 That a detailed quotation from three companies is obtained and the results brought back to full council.
- 7.2 That consideration is given to using the main hall at the Town Hall, or another suitable space, as a dedicated council chamber to meet in. This would mitigate the need to frequently move and set up equipment. Given the increased frequency of council meetings, it would appear challenging now to offer the main hall, for example, at the town hall for regular evening hires anyway. A dedicated meeting space would also reduce staff time in setting up meetings and stripping out afterwards, plus potentially increase the reliability of the setup.
- 7.3 That consideration is given to the need for the staff resource anticipated to be required for manual finessing of the cameras and controlling the streaming; also the

sanitising of microphone equipment and high touch surfaces between usage, by members of the public during public participation.

- 7.4 There is currently no budget provision in 2021/22 for this type of installation. At this stage, it is likely that the costs of such an installation would need to be met from reserves. It is recommended though that the necessary specifications and requirements are finalised, detailed quotations are sought and brought back to council for further consideration/approval.

## **8 CONTACT**

**David McKnight**

Economic Development Manager

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## MELKSHAM TOWN COUNCIL

### FULL COUNCIL MEETING

**22 MARCH 2021**

#### **Report: MELKSHAM TOWN COUNCIL PARKING CHARGE REDEMPTION SCHEME**

#### **1 BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 At the meeting of Melksham Town Council on 2 September 2020, The Council's Parking Charge Redemption Scheme in the town centre, was discussed. The scheme, offered at that time, was for 1 hour of free parking, with receipts being redeemable at town centre business premises.
- 1.2 The scheme had been running a while, with low levels of take-up, but was substantially re-invigorated and more business participants recruited, prior to the second and subsequent COVID-19 lockdowns and tiering restrictions.
- 1.3 It was also reported that the impact of the scheme was being diminished. At the time, this was thought to be due to a number of factors:
  - 1.3.1 Principally the impact of the first COVID-19 lockdown
  - 1.3.2 The lack of car parking charges being levied by Wiltshire Council during the first lockdown
  - 1.3.3 The slow-down of high street shopping activity due to COVID-19 reopening guidelines [report author's opinion]
- 1.4 This Council resolved to increase the scheme offer to redeem the cost of up to 2 hours free parking.

#### **2 CURRENT SITUATION**

- 2.1 The continued impact of the pandemic, and the sequential lockdowns endured, has continue to diminish the impact of the scheme.
- 2.2 Non-essential retail plus hospitality businesses largely remain closed and are likely to remain so for some time yet.

- 2.3 Experience is suggesting that the benefits of this scheme are best conveyed to businesses and their staff by in-person selling. This is not possible currently.
- 2.4 There was evidence that the 1-hour parking charge redemption scheme did not capture the public imagination. The impact of increasing the parking charge redemption limit to 2 hours parking cannot yet be determined.

### **3 DETAILS**

- 3.1 We currently have 17 businesses engaged with the scheme.
- 3.2 Demand from the public for redemption of charges is extremely low.
- 3.3 The author's opinion is that this scheme will only work when businesses actively 'sell it in' to their customers and treat it as a valuable means of building their customer loyalty and securing repeat customer visits each time they come to the town centre. This will require in-person selling of the scheme and, potentially, some staff coaching.
- 3.4 The potential to increase the value of the redemption charge refund [the additional cost being at the retailer's expense] against purchases, is not being embraced.
- 3.5 The PR value of the scheme to the council could be significant, as the town is able to reopen from lockdown restrictions.

### **4 RESOURCES AND BUDGET**

- 4.1 The total amount of parking charge redemptions refunded to retailers over the current financial year to date is just £22.35.
- 4.2 There is provision in the 2021/22 budget for the redemption of parking charges under the scheme.

### **5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1 The scheme in its current form should be reintroduced to retailers as part of a high street support package as COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.
- 5.2 This reintroduction should be supported by a PR campaign to build understanding and momentum, as residents start to return to our town centre without significant restrictions.
- 5.3 There should be increasing emphasis on the scheme being participating retailer promoted to allow the building of loyalty to the business by customers.
- 5.4 There should be increased awareness raising that the parking charge refund, up to the current scheme limit, is completely independent of an obligation to make a purchase.

- 5.5 However, the potential for retailers to offer an increase in the value of the redemption charge refund [the additional cost at the retailer's expense], at their discretion, against any purchases, should be explained and explored with retailers during one-to-one conversations.

## **6 CONTACT**

**David McKnight**

Economic Development Manager

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