

## **Melksham Town Council**

### **Minutes of the Extraordinary Council meeting held on Thursday 12th May 2022**

**PRESENT:** Councillor J Hubbard  
Councillor C Goodhind  
Councillor P Alford  
Councillor P Aves  
Councillor G Cooke  
Councillor J Crundell  
Councillor S Crundell  
Councillor G Ellis  
Councillor C Houghton  
Councillor L Lewis  
Councillor S Mortimer  
Councillor J Oatley  
Councillor T Price  
Councillor S Rabey

**OFFICERS:** Linda Roberts                      Town Clerk  
Christine Hunter                      Committee Clerk

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:** One member of the press and five members of the public were present. Four members of the public were present virtually.

**272/21 Apologies**  
Apologies were received from Councillor Forgacs

**273/21 Declarations of Interest**  
  
There were no declarations of interest.

**274/21 Minutes**  
  
It was proposed by the Town Mayor, Councillor Hubbard, seconded by the Deputy Town Mayor, Councillor Goodhind and  
  
**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that the minutes of 4 April 2022 having previously been circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor, Councillor Hubbard.

**275/21 Assembly Hall**  
  
The report of the Head of Operations of Operations and the proposal for the revised pricing structure were received.

The Town Mayor, Councillor Hubbard, stated that he was disappointed about inappropriate comments from members about the lateness of the papers on social media. He explained that working with the Head of Operations of Operations he had produced the second proposal for the revised pricing structure for the Assembly Hall. The second proposal looks at pricing from a different viewpoint; by removing sales related costs and any income, to run the Assembly Hall for a year, would cost £159,480. If the Assembly Hall was open 365 days a year for 6 hours per day, it would cost £83.23 per hour to run.

Councillors discussed lack of data showing previous Assembly Hall hire rates, rises in utilities costs, maintenance and repairs of the Assembly Hall, current running costs, increases in officer time required, utilisation rates and compared the two pricing models suggested.

The Chair suspended the meeting for a comfort break at 9.05 pm, the meeting recommenced at 9.13 pm.

Councillor Ellis asked the following questions which he agreed to forward to the Town Clerk for clarification.

1. He was concerned that the late publication of documents one clear day ahead of the meeting was legal when he understood 3 clear days was mandatory. Could the Town Clerk confirm whether it was legal to ask councillors to consider the item at such short notice?

The Town Clerk confirmed that it was lawful to consider the agenda item as it had been published in the agenda which stated the business to be transacted.

2. Why was the document late when this has been scheduled since March? Is there something in the document which wouldn't bear public examination or detailed analysis?
3. He was concerned that this item would be decided on few days before a new Mayor was elected who would then have to implement the plans of the previous Mayor.

Councillor Ellis also raised the following queries on information provided in the Head of Operations report:

- Salaries – Assembly Hall staff are seated in main building answering queries. As the teams are merged were the figures accurate?
- Proposed fees - Analysis of market elasticity - how was the figure of 35% utilisation arrived at?
- Looking at other hall pricing – the information provided was useful but not comprehensive as it did not show all competitors information.

- Relaunch – has an allowance been made for build-up period and extra staffing required for the change in business?
- How do these proposals prepare for the longer term strategy? How can councillors agree to a proposal when they do not know what the prospect is?
- Event organisers were suggesting that the new structure proposed would be a risk they did not want to take.
- Has an analysis been undertaken of market elasticity to confirm what business we would expect to lose if the fees are raised?
- What would the anticipate seed costs be?
- Where would the staff time come from?

It was proposed by the Town Mayor, Councillor Hubbard, seconded by the Deputy Town Mayor, Councillor Goodhind, and

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to suspend Standing Orders.

Paul Seemayer stated that the concept of split publicity for events is a profitable suggestion as it is disappointing that previously members of the public have not been aware of events. The Assembly Hall being hired to two customers at the same time has been done historically but needs careful consideration due to noise. Paul asked whether charitable organisations had to pay VAT on Assembly Hall hire charges. Councillor Mortimer responded that VAT is charged but charitable organisations can register not to pay VAT or claim it back.

Bruce Burry asked what the hire rate would be for a private hire? The Town Mayor, Councillor Hubbard, explained this is a decision the Town Council need to make but that the Council need to ensure that the costs of running the Assembly Hall are covered.

Standing Orders were re-instated.

Councillor Price left the meeting at 9.35 pm

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

**RESOLVED** that Council would adopt the Option B (Model 2) as proposed by the Town Mayor, Councillor Hubbard, with the proviso that a temporary Assembly Hall Working Group be set up to work out potential future charges by:

- obtaining comparisons of charges with other local similar sized venues
- obtaining historic data of Assembly Hall hires
- gather evidence of what the public require from the Assembly Hall to suggest an informed revision of the agreed hire rates below
- bring recommendations on pricing to Full Council for revision/approval, and

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

**RESOLVED** that the Council set the hire rates for the Assembly Hall effective from today's date (12 May 2022), and

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

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that the following hire charges for the whole of the Assembly Hall would be adopted with a view to being revised in the Autumn 2022, following recommendations from the Assembly Hall Working Group:

- £90.00 standard hourly charge for Commercial hires.
- 75% discount from the standard hourly charge for Melksham not-for-profit organisations.
- 50% discount from the standard hourly charge for Melksham residents for private bookings.
- 30% discount from the standard hourly charge for non-Melksham residents and non-Melksham not-for-profit organisations.

## **276/21 Neighbourhood Plan #2 Expenditure**

Members received the notes of the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group meetings held on 16 March and 27 April 2022.

It was proposed by Councillor Rabey, seconded by Councillor S Crundell and

**RESOLVED** to approve that Melksham Town Council pay 50% of the Place Studio £1,000 + VAT invoice relating to the provision of information and representation at the Planning Appeal 20/07334/OUT: development of 50 dwellings on land to rear of Townsend Farm, Semington Road, with Melksham Without Parish Council meeting the balance, and

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

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to approve the following payments:

1. Melksham Town Council's 70% share of £5,000 excl. VAT on review work by Place Studio of Neighbourhood Plan #2 for the period until May, prior to the receipt of further grant funding from Locality.
2. Melksham Town Council's 70% share of the £6,743 + VAT balance of the Place Studio Invoice, with Melksham Without Parish Council paying the remaining 30%.
3. Melksham Town Council's 70% share of the future expenditure on NHP#2 with Melksham Without Parish Council paying the remaining 30%, and

It was proposed by Councillor S Crundell, seconded by the Town Mayor, Councillor Hubbard, and

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to endorse the resolution made at the Economic Development and Planning Committee meeting held on 9 May 2022, that the Town Clerk has delegated authority to approve payments on the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan up to £10,000.

Meeting Closed at: 8.50 pm

**Signed:** .....

**Dated:**