

Melksham Town Council

Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on Tuesday 9th August 2022

PRESENT:

Councillor S Crundell (Town Mayor)
Councillor S Mortimer (Deputy Town Mayor)
Councillor P Alford
Councillor P Aves
Councillor G Cooke
Councillor G Ellis
Councillor C Forgacs
Councillor C Goodhind
Councillor C Houghton
Councillor J Hubbard
Councillor J Oatley
Councillor T Price

OFFICERS:

Linda Roberts	Town Clerk
Hugh Davies	Head of Operations
Christine Hunter	Committee Clerk

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: No members of the public or press were present. One member of the public was present virtually.

357/22 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors J Crundell, Lewis and Rabey.

358/22 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest, however Councillor Alford explained he was a Wiltshire Councillor, a member of the Cabinet of Wiltshire Council and had worked with the Publicly Owned Assets in Melksham Working Group.

359/22 Confidential Session

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

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the agenda item, Publicly Owned Assets in Melksham Working Group would not be held in confidential session.

360/22 Publicly Owned Assets in Melksham Working Group

Councillor Alford explained that the Library and Blue Pool had moved into the newly opened Campus and there had been planning conditions set as part of the Campus Planning permission obligated Wiltshire Council to invest heavily in Melksham House and make it available for public use.

Councillor Alford confirmed that:

- the Publicly Owned Assets in Melksham Working Group, first met in January 2022, and had identified which sites were owned publicly in Melksham Town.
- at the second meeting the group considered the best way to progress and explore current facilities and agreed to come back to the Town Council to identify what future requirements would be, what were important sites and what facilities the Town Council would want to keep.
- it was the responsibility of the Town Council to decide on the future use of the publicly owned buildings in Melksham. However, Wiltshire Council sites have to show best financial value and it would not be acceptable for buildings such as the Blue Pool and library to be closed long-term.
- when considering options the Councils would need to be aware of the significant planning challenges presented, which include Grade II listed buildings.

The Town Mayor, Councillor S Crundell, explained that it was imperative that the Town Council secure the future of the Assembly Hall, by either investing in repairing, refurbishing and modernising or rebuilding at another site. The Town Mayor, Councillor S Crundell, explained that to do nothing would eventually result in the loss of the Assembly Hall as investment was needed in substantial repairs and maintenance to ensure the building was fit for purpose.

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

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to suspend Standing Orders to allow the public to speak.

Pam Wiltshire stated that the Council needed to consider Wiltshire Council's timescales regarding their publicly owned assets as the offer of working together would not be indefinite.

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

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to reinstate Standing Orders

Councillor Hubbard proposed that the Council sought to identify the community's need by having a public consultation, and then focus on how to meet that need. Councillor Hubbard suggested that the consultation should be Council led with the brief written by Council, and should consider:

- pressure on officer time
- realistic timings to carry out a full consultation
- costs involved

- help required to build a project management plan.
- that the consultation would take 6-9 months.

The Town Mayor, Councillor S Crundell, explained that whatever the projects chosen the Council would need to identify both the economic and financial value, and would be obliged to follow the disposal of assets legislation.

The Town Mayor, Councillor S Crundell, suggested a friendly amendment to Councillor Hubbard that the consultation period be reduced to 3 months.

The Town Clerk explained that she had previous experience of carrying out large consultations and advised the use of Community First who have innovative ideas and experience. However, if she could devote 75% of her time to the consultation exercise it may be possible to get it completed in three months but some of her current work would have to be put on hold.

Councillor Hubbard repeated his original proposal that the Council write and agree a brief of the Consultation to be forwarded to Community First, who will take approximately 8 weeks for the consultation. Community First would write their report but he suggested the process be given a six-month time limit.

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

RESOLVED to delegate to the Town Clerk to appoint Community First to carry out a full public consultation identifying what the public wanted from the Assembly Hall and then to identify how that need could be met.

A formal amendment to Councillor Hubbard's motion was proposed by the Town Mayor, Councillor S Crundell seconded by Councillor Alford, and

RESOLVED to add to Councillor Hubbard's resolution "that delegated costs of no more than £2,000 be allocated for the production of a public consultation on the Assembly Hall and that the results of the public consultation be returned to Full Council no more than three months from the date of this meeting for consideration".

Meeting Closed at: 8.50 pm

Signed:

Dated: