

Melksham Town Council

Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on Monday 19th December 2022

PRESENT:

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

OFFICERS:

Linda Roberts	Town Clerk
Hugh Davies	Head of Operations
Patsy Clover	Deputy Town Clerk

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: One member of the press was present. Six members of the public were present virtually.

Bruce Sanders wondered whether income received by the Council from the solar farm could be used to help provide a better education for primary school children in Melksham. He also asked if the Wiltshire Councillors present could provide earlier notification of grants available to enable applications to be made, citing late notification of closing dates for grants for SENs and Adult Maths Access as examples.

402/22 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Forgacs, Hubbard, and Lewis.

403/22 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

404/22 Lighting for King George V Park

Richard Taylor, design consultant, provided a summary of the reports prepared by him regarding options for illuminating different areas of King George V Park. He explained

that he had been asked to compare solar LED with hardwired LED and had costed both options based on 4m and 6m column heights. He had done the same for a heritage option for columns and lanterns.

Members discussed the areas of the park which they considered needed lighting. It was noted that the areas under consideration were the inner ring of the park or two key routes across park – across from the Dog Bark and from Waitrose to the Adventure Centre across to the car park.

Concerns were raised about encouraging people to use the park in the evening and the fact that this may encourage anti-social behaviour. It was noted by Councillors Rabey and Mortimer that some residents were in favour of lighting the park and that some weren't.

The Town Mayor, Councillor S Crundell reminded members that the resolution to implement the scheme with the costs met from the major projects reserve had been made on 13 December 2021. He believed that It was imperative to make progress.

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

RESOLVED to purchase 15 6m lighting columns with swan necks to light up the inner circle of the park, being the main thoroughfare around the park, at a cost not exceeding £60,000 to be met from the major projects reserve.

A recorded vote was taken:

Councillor	Absent	For	Against	Abstain
Alford		X		
Aves		X		
Cooke		X		
Crundell J		X		
Crundell S		X		
Ellis				X
Forgacs	X			
Goodhind			X	
Houghton		X		
Hubbard	X			
Lewis	X			
Mortimer			X	
Oatley		X		
Price		X		
Rabey		X		
Totals	3	9	2	1

The Town Clerk confirmed that the vote was carried.

405/22 Major Grant Applications

405/22.1 Alzheimer's Support

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

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to award £1,680 from the current £25,000 grants' budget.

405/22.2 Melksham Music and Drama

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

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to award £1,200 from the current £25,000 grants' budget.

405/22.3 Trans Wilts

Members did not support this grant application.

405/22.4 Rainbow Day Centre

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

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to defer consideration of the application until Rainbow Day Centre had liaised with Wiltshire Council about new sources of funding opportunities available for luncheon clubs.

406/22 Maintenance Building - King George V Park

Concerns were raised by members about the dramatic increase in the anticipated construction costs for the maintenance shed per the cost estimate report prepared by MEA Architects. However, It was recognised that a decision needed to be made to continue with the project or to put it on hold for the time-being, whilst considering other locations.

The Head of Operations provided an update about other options which had been considered and reported that these were no longer viable.

It was agreed that the derelict maintenance shed in King George V Park needed to be demolished as soon as possible. The Town Clerk confirmed that she was instigating an asbestos survey and a bat survey before the building could be demolished.

Councillor Mortimer reminded members that the idea had been to finance a Public Works Loan Board loan with the saving in rental payments. However, if the precept would now have to be increased to fund the build, a public consultation would have to take place.

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

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to continue to rent the unit at Bowerhill and not to build a new facility at King George V Park, to demolish the existing building in King George V Park, to explore options for working with the owner of the unit at Bowerhill to adapt the rental unit to better meet the needs of the Amenities Team and to continue to monitor the market for a suitable property to purchase, a more suitable rental property and for options for sites to build a maintenance shed.

407/22 Minutes

The minutes of 28 November 2022, having previously been circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor, Councillor S Crundell.

The Town Mayor, Councillor S Crundell, then reported the answers to the questions which Pam Wiltshire attempted to raise at the previous council meeting, but was prevented from doing so due to a technical issue with the Zoom link, as follows:

Question:

1. *Will the trees being offered to residents be available shortly or could you advise residents when they will be.*

Answer: An order was placed on 1 November and Ed from Landford Trees reported that the trees would be available at the end of the month. The delivery date is scheduled for 22nd December. The Community Development Officer will arrange a collection day for residents.

Question:

2. *Please could the council advise how much money has been spent on external consultants since May 2021 (this current council) and a breakdown of what projects the spending has been assigned to, plus the cost of HR consultants*

Answer: Consultants

Cricket Pavilion Consultation £3,000

HR Consultants - £13,750

Neighbourhood Plan - £12,810.07

Town Centre Master Plan - £3,160

Priority for People - £9,501.10

KGV Lighting - £1540

Maintenance Building KGV – Planning design - £3,124.80

Assembly Hall Consultation - £2000

Question:

3. *Please could you advise residents as to what the situation is regarding the Eco toilets for the park. Will they actually ever happen - how much expense has been spent on any work for this project.*

Answer: No expenses to date. Expected delivery February 2023.

Question:

4. *Could the council advise when the zip wire will be open – it was expected to be ready for the October school break.*

Answer: The Zip Wire was installed in November 2022. To allow the grass areas to establish, it will be opened for February half term 2023.

408/22 Questions from Councillors

Councillor Ellis requested an update regarding the resolution made at the meeting of Full Council on 3 October where it was resolved to change the opening hours of the Town Hall and to explore opening the Town Hall one evening a week.

The Town Mayor, Councillor S Crundell, advised that questions need to be submitted five days before the meeting and that a written response would be provided.

409/22 Reports from Unitary Councillors

Members received an update from Councillor Alford on the following matters affecting Melksham which had been discussed at Wiltshire Council meetings:

- The Area Board were provided with an update regarding the Parish Steward scheme at their last meeting, reporting that the scheme had received further funding from Wiltshire Council
- The Area Board had funded the purchase of electric blankets to be distributed by Melksham Community Dining. The idea was now also being explored to distribute more through the Food Bank
- Wiltshire Council had identified three sites in Melksham which could go through a disposals process for sites surplus to Wiltshire Council's requirements including:

Blue Pool
Melksham House, and

The library site including the building behind the library and the car park - car parking at the library would have to be maintained.

Wiltshire Council will now work with partners to explore future uses for the sites.

410/22 Draft Budget 2023-2024

The following queries and amendments were raised:

101/4040 – Information Technology/ Hardware - is it £20,000 plus £5,000 from Earmarked Reserves for hardware or £15,000 plus £5,000 from Earmarked Reserves for hardware?

115/4034 – Councillors' Training – there should be investment in training for councillors

201/1034 – Income Town Hall Bookings – as this had been reduced by £6,000, from £8,000 to £2,000, as some Assembly Hall income had been misanalysed, should the income figure under 501/1000 – Income – Assembly Hall Lettings – be increased by £6,000?

201/4261 – Building Condition Reps Works – it was noted that the provision of £70,000 related to all properties, not just the Town Hall, and would have to be met through the precept

202/4167 – Street Furniture and Signage – can expenditure on this wait until the following financial year? It was agreed that officers would review essential maintenance needed

215/4161 – Rates Unit at Bowerhill – is a duplicate of 215/4102 Non Domestic Rates

215/4160 – Leasing – should be reduced to the actual rent payable of £12,350

220/4158 – Replacement Play Equipment – the budget for the current year hasn't been spent and yet it is proposed to maintain the budget at the same level next year

220/4179 – Tree Planting – it was confirmed that the budget for the current financial year will be spent in its entirety

302/4078 – Community Projects – could be increased and renamed Community Events

302/4081 – Melksham Art Project – reduce to £1,000

302/4083 – Virtual Community Hub – reduce to £1,000

403/4354 – Parking Scheme – reduce to £500

403/4925 – Town Development – could the underspend from the current financial year be rolled forward to the 2023/2024 financial year to reduce the required budget?

405/1182 – Solar Money Received – should the budgeted figure be more accurate based on the amount received in the current financial year?

501/4923 – Management Information Systems – is the cost of such a system economical when compared to the income received from the Assembly Hall?

501/4929 – AIB – as costs were being separated from income, should the income figure under 501/1000 – Income – Assembly Hall Lettings – be adjusted?

501/4949 - Provision/ Hire Stage Lights - as costs were being separated from income, should the income figure under 501/1000 – Income – Assembly Hall Lettings – be adjusted?

501/4958 – Event Security - as costs were being separated from income, should the income figure under 501/1000 – Income – Assembly Hall Lettings – be adjusted?

901/9249 – Jubilee Celebrations – could this reserve be used to celebrate the coronation of King Charles III?

Councillor Houghton mentioned the importance of completing outstanding projects for which residents had already been taxed through previous precepts rather than add new projects, thereby increasing the precept for 2023/2024. The Town Clerk agreed to circulate her report regarding the use of earmarked reserves again. The importance of having a Strategic Plan with action plans for each committee was stressed.

The Town Mayor, Councillor S Crundell, confirmed that no legal limit to the amount that the precept could be raised by existed for parish councils. However, the desire to keep the increase to the precept to as modest a figure as possible was noted. He emphasised the need to create an ongoing sinking fund for the town's play areas.

Councillor Mortimer questioned whether the Town Council's reserves could be used to support the proposed budget rather than increasing the precept.

It was agreed to hold a meeting of the Budget Working Group on Friday 13 January 2023 at 6pm.

411/22 Calendar of Meetings 2023-2024

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

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to adopt version two of the calendar of meetings for 2023/2024.

412/22 Accounts

It was agreed to defer consideration of the financial reports until the next meeting of Full Council.

413/22 Appointment of New Committee Member

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

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Rabey and Councillor J Crundell to the Community Development Committee.

414/22 Items for Information

414/22.1 Suggested Location of Wildflower Area at Shurnhold Fields

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

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to approve the location proposed by Wessex Water for a wildflower meadow in Shurnhold Fields, noting that there were no financial implications for the Town Council.

414/22.2 Wilts & Berks Canal Trust November 2022

The minutes of the Melksham, Calne and Chippenham and Foxham and Lyneham Branch meeting of the Wilts and Berks Canal Trust were received.

414/22.3 Wiltshire Swindon & Oxfordshire Canal Partnership

The draft notes of the Wiltshire, Swindon & Oxfordshire Canal Partnership meeting held in September 2022 and the actions from the October 2022 meeting were received.

414/22.4 Melksham & Melksham Without Housing Needs Assessment

The updated Melksham and Melksham Without Housing Needs Assessment was noted.

Meeting Closed at: 9.57 pm

Signed:

Dated: