

Melksham Town Council

Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on Monday 15th May 2023

PRESENT:

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

IN ATTENDANCE: One member of the press and six members of the public were present and three members of the public were present virtually.

OFFICERS:	Linda Roberts	Town Clerk
	Andrew Meacham	Committee Clerk

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Town Mayor invited members of the public to address council.

Mike Saunders remarked on the fact that a couple of officers have left the council who were part of the Environment and Climate Working Group. He was disappointed that the wider membership had not been advised. He asked if it was possible to have a list of officers' names and contact details.

Terri Welch wanted to bring to council's attention the situation with the Weir gate which is currently owned by Cooper Tires. Terri reported that the Environment Agency were not willing to take on the responsibility. Terri thought the town council should be aware as it is a key element in preventing the town centre from flooding.

Robert Carter asked some questions on responsibility for:

- Footpath clearing
- Events and carnivals, particularly the Jubilee Celebrations and the Coronation Event, asking how events were planned

- Public consultation
- The decision to cancel the Sunday (Coronation) event
- Ceremonial aspects of the town
- The union flag on the Town Hall not fitting for the Coronation, adding that it is important that the Town Hall is kept looking at its best
- The planting on the roundabout
- Weeds in the Market Place
- Decisions on weeding and trimming
- The budget spent on lights in the park
- Engaging volunteers to assist with events etc

491/23 Election of Town Mayor

The Town Mayor, Councillor S Crundell called for nominations for the office of Town Mayor.

It was proposed by Councillor Aves, seconded by Councillor J Crundell and

RESOLVED that Councillor S Crundell be elected as Town Mayor for the ensuing year.

The newly elected Town Mayor assumed the chair.

492/23 Declaration of Acceptance of Office

The newly elected Town Mayor, Councillor S Crundell read out and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office which was witnessed and signed by the Town Clerk.

493/23 Outgoing Mayor's Address

The Town Mayor, Councillor S Crundell gave an address which combined the Outgoing Mayor's address and the Newly Elected Mayor's Address.

It is with greatest pleasure that I address you tonight, as my year as your Mayor comes to a close.

This year has not been without significant challenges, as every member in this chamber is aware. But as from every winter comes spring, I have myself in full confidence that, as a team, we are working constructively on a path of recovery. I am extremely grateful to every councillor who has worked to be a part of this, and I hope that we can continue in this cooperative spirit to see all of our recommendations implemented in full.

Community is the foundation upon which we build our town and the driving force behind everything that we do. Our shared commitment to community is what sets us apart and makes our town a truly special place to call home. My sincere thanks are owed to all councillors who volunteer to make our town's events possible, with special thanks to the councillors who go above and beyond in their volunteering commitment: Aves, Mortimer, Houghton, Rabey, Price, Goodhind, and Ellis. And we must also commend the fantastic work of our officers, particularly Gloria and Sara, who have recently organised yet another wonderful town event to be proud of in the celebrations of the King's Coronation.

As a town, we have shared moments of jubilation and sorrow. The Platinum Jubilee of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II was a magnificent celebration that brought together thousands of residents in the Market Place. The air was filled with the sounds of laughter and fun as fairground rides, stalls, and live music created a vibrant atmosphere. The Town Hall showcased a Royal photo exhibition, and the Red Arrows surprised us with a spectacular flyover.

But when the news of our Queen's death reached our ears, our hearts were heavy with grief. The loss of such a remarkable monarch touched the souls of many. In the wake of her majesty's death, our community paid heartfelt tributes and sent messages of condolences to Buckingham Palace. It was a poignant moment, one that stirred our emotions and reminded us of the love and admiration we have for the Queen.

The proclamation of King Charles III was a duty that I had hoped I would never have to fulfil as Mayor, but I was proud to witness the sombre reverence and phenomenal community spirit that Melksham displayed. Let us continue to come together in times of joy and sorrow, and cherish the memories that we have shared as a town.

With this in mind, as I reflect on the past year, there is one moment that truly stands out to me - the magical evening of our Christmas lights switch-on. The town was bathed in a warm, twinkling glow, and the air was filled with the joy and excitement of the Christmas period. I am deeply grateful to Paul Weymouth and the Melksham Christmas Lights committee for their tireless dedication and hard work in creating such a spectacular display.

But the beauty of this event runs deeper than the sparkling lights and festive cheer. It is a symbol of the importance of community and the power of coming together to celebrate what truly matters. Christmas is a time of love, of giving, and of hope, and it is events like these that remind us of the goodness and magic that exists in our town.

I want to take this opportunity to express my appreciation for the incredible effort that goes into making events like these possible. The Town Council officers and councillors, and the many volunteers who give their time and energy to bring our town together are the backbone of Melksham. It takes an enormous amount of planning, coordination, and hard work to ensure that these events are a success, and we are lucky to have such dedicated and passionate individuals in our midst.

So, to our Town Council officers, councillors, Melksham Christmas Lights committee, and to all those volunteers numbering more than 40 who played a part in making our Christmas lights switch-on such a memorable occasion, I offer my heartfelt thanks. You have brought light and joy into our town during a dark and damp December, and for that, we are forever grateful.

Amidst the hustle and bustle of our town's events and celebrations, it is easy to overlook the critical work that goes on behind the scenes. To our Finance Officer Mel who has been busy working on our year end accounts. To Reece, Paul, Joe, Dave and Hugh, we owe a debt of gratitude to their ceaseless commitment to ensuring our town looks clean, beautiful, and vibrant, and that our facilities, such as the much-loved splashpad, are available as an amenity to our residents.

To Kevin, Bruce, and our team of Assembly Hall staff we are grateful for your creativity, and determination to ensure that our town's assembly hall is a welcoming and accessible place to meet.

Our town council has been diligently working to address the pressing issues of our time, including establishing an Avon Tires working group to coordinate this council's work to support our fellow townsfolk in this difficult transition, but also to ensure the legacy of this great company is preserved for generations to come. Particular thanks are owed to Cllr Price for bringing his knowledge, enthusiasm, and experience to this effort.

More broadly, the times in which we live are a pivotal moment in our collective history, and we must act now to preserve the natural world for future generations. Britain is the most biodiversity-deficient country in Europe, and with Wiltshire being an agricultural county, it is more important than ever to ensure that our town adds to the ecological richness of the area, rather than detracting from it.

That is why our town council held its inaugural Climate Fest, where local groups came together to tackle the urgent issues of climate change and biodiversity loss. We distributed free saplings to every interested resident as part of our support for The Queen's Green Canopy, and we developed a tree planting strategy to enhance Melksham's ecological diversity. A huge thanks is owed to Cllrs Rabey, Aves, Ellis, Mortimer, as well as the dedicated group of community representatives on the Environment and Climate Working Group who work so hard to drive our work in the environmental domain.

These initiatives mark the beginning of our renewed focus on the environment, and we are committed to taking further steps to protect our natural world. The health of our planet and the diversity of our ecosystems are not just moral imperatives, but are essential for our survival and well-being. Although Melksham's contribution may be small by global standards, it is crucial that we play our part in addressing the biodiversity crisis, and by doing so, we can have a significant impact on our bit of England and perhaps beyond.

As we look to the future, let us remember that we are all stewards of the Earth, and we must work together to create a sustainable and thriving world. With the determination and dedication of our town council and community, I have myself in full confidence that we can rise to the challenges of our time and leave a positive legacy for generations to come.

This legacy must also be evident in our town's assets, which the council has been busy in improving. We have completed the long-awaited transfer of the Spiritualist Garden, which is now open to all residents to find peace and tranquillity. And we have invested

in our playgrounds, with the installation of a new zipwire in King George V, new play equipment for the town's dog owners, and a planned programme of regeneration of our town's playgrounds. Fencing around King George V park will soon be replaced, securing this vital community amenity for lawful recreation. Further, the Cricketer's Cafe will now be returned as a public amenity, serving residents who make use of our wonderful park. Special thanks are owed to Cllrs Hubbard, Aves, Goodhind and Ellis for their work in selecting the best candidate. This, combined with the demolition of the old maintenance shed, will vastly improve the scenery of the north of the park and make the facility far more welcoming to visitors.

Looking ahead, we will be expanding our CCTV network to ensure that areas prone to anti-social behaviour are safe for all residents, King George V playing fields will see the installation of new lighting, the footpath opposite Texaco on Sandridge road will be widened, and we will be putting our second Joint Neighbourhood Plan to the town in a referendum.

Amidst the hum of progress and the clamour of change, it is easy to lose sight of the importance of careful planning and the tireless work that goes into it. Yet, in Melksham, we know the value of such endeavours. The Melksham Joint Neighbourhood Plan is a colossal undertaking, a testament to the immense effort of our Neighbourhood Planning Team, composed of councillors and residents alike. Working alongside our neighbours, Melksham Without Parish Council, we have been busily working away on this project, for the good of the future of our town and its residents.

Their dedication has yielded an abundance of feedback from the heart of our community, with residents and local businesses alike offering their invaluable insights on how we can best shape the future of our town. The Plan is an opportunity for the people of Melksham to have a say on how developments are shaped in the future. We have received lots of feedback on infrastructure requirements, sustainable energy production, the retail offering and a Town Centre Masterplan, the protection of wild spaces, and so much more.

Neighbourhood Plans are no small feat, but they are a vital one. They provide a means for us to have a say in how our community develops, to determine the infrastructure we need, to shape the contours of our retail spaces, and to protect our wild spaces from the onslaught of development. While we may not have the power to affect the volume of house building, we have the power to shape the character of our community.

As we continue to build new homes and welcome new members to our community, it is crucial that we do so in a way that enhances the ecological diversity of our town, and that promotes community building. The Melksham Joint Neighbourhood Plan allows for community building, not merely housebuilding. Through the Plan, we have an opportunity to create a future that we can be proud of, one that reflects the voices and values of our town, and gives you, the people of Melksham, a voice that is protected in statute as to how our town grows in the coming decades.

I want to express my heartfelt appreciation to my esteemed colleagues on the council, our Clerk Linda Roberts, our dedicated staff, and the selfless volunteers who work tirelessly to make Melksham a town that we can all be proud of. It is because of your unwavering commitment and hard work that we have achieved so much progress this

year. We have made progress, but let us not rest on our laurels. There is much more to be done, and we must continue our efforts to build a better, more sustainable future for our town. We must work tirelessly to protect and preserve our natural environment, to create a community that is safe, welcoming, and prosperous for all.

494/23 Newly Elected Mayor's Address

See above.

495/23 Election of Deputy Mayor

The Town Mayor, Councillor S Crundell, called for nominations for the office of Deputy Town Mayor.

Councillor Mortimer nominated as a candidate.

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

RESOLVED that Councillor Price be elected as Deputy Town Mayor for the ensuing year.

496/23 Declaration of Acceptance of Office

The newly elected Deputy Town Mayor, Councillor Price, read out and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office which was witnessed and signed by the Town Clerk.

497/23 Apologies

There were no apologies.

498/23 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

499/23 Minutes

The minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 27 February 2023 and the Extraordinary Town Council Meeting held on 28 March 2023, having previously been circulated were approved as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor Councillor S Crundell.

500/23 Signing of Deeds and Legal Documents

It was **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that the Town Mayor, Councillor S Crundell, the Deputy Town Mayor, Councillor Price, Councillor Forgacs and Councillor Rabey would sign legal documents on behalf of the Council.

501/23 Standing Orders

Councillors discussed Standing Orders and a query was raised by Councillor Hubbard as to figures on the amendment. The Town Clerk to investigate and report back

Standing Orders would therefore stand adjourned until the next Full Council Meeting scheduled for 22 May 2023.

502/23 Financial Regulations 2023

Councillors discussed Financial Regulations 2023 and a query was raised by Councillor Hubbard as to figures on the amendment. The Town Clerk to investigate and report back to the Full Council Meeting scheduled 22 May 2023.

503/23 Investment Report

The Investment Report was noted.

504/23 Terms of Reference

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

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to approve the Committee Terms of Reference.

505/23 Committees

Membership of Committees

Asset Management and Amenities Committee

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

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to elect the following members to the Asset Management and Amenities Committee:

Councillors, Aves, Cooke, S Crundell, Ellis, Forgacs, Goodhind, Hubbard, Oatley and Price.

It was **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to appoint the Deputy Town Mayor, Councillor Price as the Chair of the Committee and appoint Councillor Oatley as the Vice Chair.

Community Development Committee

It was proposed by Councillor Oatley, seconded by Councillor J Crundell and:

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to elect the following members to the Community Development Committee:

Councillors, Aves, J Crundell, Goodhind, Houghton, Mortimer, Oatley and Rabey.

It was **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to appoint Councillor Houghton as Chair of the Committee and appoint Councillor Rabey as Vice Chair.

Economic Development & Planning Committee

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

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to appoint the following members to the Economic Development and Planning Committee:

Councillors, Alford, Aves, Cooke, Ellis, Mortimer, Oatley, and Rabey.

It was **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to appoint Councillor Rabey as Chair of the Committee and Councillor Oatley as Vice Chair.

Finance, Administration and Performance Committee

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

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to appoint the following members to the Finance Administration and Performance Committee:

Councillors, Cooke, J Crundell, Ellis, Forgacs, Hubbard, Mortimer, and Rabey.

It was **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to appoint Councillor Mortimer as Chair of the Committee and Councillor Rabey as Vice Chair.

Staffing Committee (to include the Mayor and Deputy Mayor)

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

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Oatley to the Staffing Committee, Councillor Alford and Councillor Rabey were appointed as substitutes.

506/23 Working Groups

Council agreed to vote for membership of Working Groups en bloc. It was proposed by the Councillor Hubbard, seconded by Councillor Forgacs and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to appoint membership to the Working Groups as follows:

Assembly Hall Working Group:

Councillors Aves, Cooke, Ellis, Goodhind and Mortimer.

Budget Working Group:

Councillors Aves, Cooke, J Crundell, Ellis, Forgacs, and Mortimer.

Business Review Working Group:

It was **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to dissolve the working group.

Canal Working Group:

It was **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to dissolve the working group and to renew if planning for the canal proceeds.

CCTV and Community Safety Working Group:

Councillors Aves, Goodhind, Mortimer and Oatley.

CIL Funding Projects Working Group:

Councillors Alford, Ellis and Hubbard.

Community Arts Working Group:

It was **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to dissolve the working group and use the Community Development Committee to develop and or progress community art projects.

Environment and Climate Working Group:

Councillors Aves, J Crundell, Ellis and Mortimer.

Events

Councillors Aves, Goodhind, Houghton, Mortimer, Oatley and Price.

Melksham House and Blue Pool Strategy

It was **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to dissolve the working group.

Melksham House

Councillor Hubbard queried the purpose of this group as he believed the Town Council's bid had been refused. A decision on membership was deferred pending the Town Clerk confirming the situation.

Neighbourhood Plan Joint Steering

Councillors Aves and Ellis.

Councillors Cooke and Mortimer as substitutes

Publicly Owned Assets in Melksham Working Group:

It was **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to dissolve the working group.

Parks Working Group:

Councillors Goodhind, Hubbard, and Rabey.

Priority for People Working Group:

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

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to rename this group the Town Centre Masterplan Working Group

Councillors Cooke, Ellis and Goodhind were appointed to the working group.

Shurnhold Fields:

Councillors Alford, Aves, Mortimer and Rabey.

Virtual Hub Working Group:

It was **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to dissolve the working group as the Virtual Hub work can be progressed through the Community Development Committee.

Cooper Tires:

Councillors Alford, S Crundell, Forgacs, Price and Rabey.

507/23 Outside Bodies

Council agreed to vote for membership of outside bodies en bloc. It was proposed by the Town Mayor, Councillor S Crundell, seconded by Councillor Oatley and:

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that membership of outside bodies would be as follows:

Outside Body	Membership
2385 (Melksham) Air Training Corps	S Crundell, Mortimer
Area Board	Cooke
LHFIG	Aves
Carnival Committee	Mortimer
Melksham Adventure Centre	Mortimer
Melksham Almshouses Charities	J Crundell, Rabey
Melksham Community Transport	Ellis
Melksham League of Friends	J Crundell
Neighbourhood Plan	
Neighbourhood Plan sub-group: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Canal Link• Climate Issues• Design Guides• Housing• Heritage	Goodhind Ellis Forgacs, S Crundell Aves, Mortimer Ellis

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Green Space • Proposed A350 Bypass • Town Centre 	Ellis Ellis, Hubbard Cooke, Ellis, Goodhind, Oatley and Rabey
North Operational Flood Working Group	
Rachel Fowler Centre Management Committee	S Mortimer
Riverside Club Management Committee	Hubbard
Shurnhold Fields Working Group	
Shurnhold Fields (Friends of)	Aves
Melksham Transport User Group	Aves
Wiltshire Association of Local Councils	S Crundell
Wiltshire, Swindon and Oxfordshire Canal Partnership	Ellis, Goodhind
The Chamber	
West Wiltshire – Elblag – Twinning Association	Aves

Meeting Closed at: 8.35 pm

Signed:

Dated: