



# Public Document Pack

## Melksham Town Council

Town Hall, Melksham, Wiltshire, SN12 6ES

Tel: (01225) 704187

Town Clerk and RFO Linda Roberts BA(Hons) PGCAP, FHEA,  
FLSCC

To:

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 J Hubbard  
Councillor J Oatley  
Councillor S Mortimer  
Councillor S Rabey  
Councillor Stokes  
Councillor J Westbrook

20 November 2023

Dear Councillors

In accordance with the Local Government Act (LGA) 1972, Sch 12, paras 10 (2)(b) you are summoned to attend the **Full Council** meeting of Melksham Town Council. The meeting will be held at the Town Hall on **Monday 27th November 2023** commencing at **7.00 pm**.

A period of public participation will take place in accordance with Standing Order 3(e) prior to the formal opening of the meeting. The Press and Public are welcome to attend this meeting in person, alternatively the public and press may join the meeting via Zoom.

In accordance with the Council's commitment to being open and transparent; all Town Council meetings are recorded and broadcast live. The right to do so was established under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations.

Yours sincerely

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

**Melksham Town Council**  
**Full Council**  
**Monday 27 November 2023**  
**At 7.00 pm at the Town Hall**

**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.*

**Virtual Meeting Access:**

Please follow the joining instructions below for the virtual Zoom meeting

**Join Zoom Meeting**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83669876198?pwd=WlAvY1ZsYVNyUIM3VktgajFxOHhtdz09>

Meeting ID: 836 6987 6198

Passcode: 481965

**Participants will be directly let in the meeting by clicking on the above link. There is no waiting room**

**AGENDA**

**1. Apologises**

To receive apologies for absence.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

To receive any Declarations of Interest in respect of items on this agenda as required by the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council.

*Members are reminded that, in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, they are required to declare any disclosable pecuniary interest or other registrable interests which have not already been declared in the Council's Register of Interests. Members may however, also decide, in the interests of clarity and transparency, to declare at this point in the meeting, any such disclosable pecuniary interests which they have already*

**Email:** [towncouncil@melksham-tc.gov.uk](mailto:towncouncil@melksham-tc.gov.uk) **Web:** [www.melksham-tc.gov.uk](http://www.melksham-tc.gov.uk)  
**Facebook:** [facebook.com/melksham.town](https://facebook.com/melksham.town)

*declared on the Register, as well as any other registrable or other interests.*

**3. Questions from Councillors**

To receive questions from Councillor Price and Councillor Westbrook.

**4. Minutes (Pages 1 - 12)**

To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the Full Town Council meeting held on 30 October 2023.

**5. Town Mayor's Announcements**

**6. Reports from Unitary Councillors**

Unitary Councillors to report on any matters affecting Melksham which have been discussed at Wiltshire Council Meetings.

**7. Virements Requested by Head of Operations (Pages 13 - 14)**

For approval.

**8. Budget 2024/2025**

Finance, Administration and Performance Committee at their meeting on 20 November 2023 resolved to recommend to full council that there be an informal budget meeting of full council to consider the budget for 2024/2025

Members are requested to set a date for an informal budget meeting of full council on either Thursday 7 December 2023 or Thursday 14 December 2023. The budget to then be finalised at the full council meeting on 22 January 2024.

**9. Biodiversity Policy (Pages 15 - 24)**

Members to receive the report regarding recent legislation and statutory duty required by the Town Council.

- To consider and approve the draft policy V1
- To consider and approve the draft plan
- To resolve which committee or working group will have responsibility for implementing the policy.

**10. East Melksham Community Hall (Pages 25 - 30)**

To advise members the Town Clerk has now given instruction to the architects to submit a planning application on the land at Spa Road.

The Town Council has tried in vain to get the consortium at Verbena Court to allow the Community Hall on that land to no avail.

Please see attached site plans for both locations as an aide memoir.

**11. Blue Pool/Assembly Hall (Pages 31 - 32)**

To approve the appointment of consultants MEA to manage the approach to obtain an options appraisal from 3 architects.

**12. Splashpad (Pages 33 - 38)**

To consider the report on Splashpad resurfacing.

Members to decide whether to approve resurfacing of the splashpad, the preferred option and funding.

**13. Social Media**

**13.1 Motion on Social Media Policy (Pages 39 - 40)**

For resolution on motion from Councillor Price to implement a policy on how the council live stream, share and store recorded council videos.

**13.2 Social Media Policy (Pages 41 - 44)**

To adopt a Social Media Policy (as attached).

**14. Committee Minutes**

**14.1 Economic Development and Planning Committee**

To receive the minutes of the Economic Development and Planning Committee meetings held on

3 October [link to minutes](#)

24 October 2023 [link to notes](#)

**14.2 Finance Administration and Performance Committee**

To receive the minutes of the Finance and Administration and performance Committee meeting held on 4 September 2023 [link to minutes](#)

**14.3 Staffing Committee**

To receive the minutes of the Staffing Committee meeting held on 25 September 2023 [link to minutes](#)

**15. Environment and Climate Working Group**

### 15.1 **ECWG Notes**

To receive the notes of the Environment and Climate working Group meetings held on

3 October 2023 [Link to notes](#)

24 October 2023 [Link to notes](#)

### 15.2 **Recommendation of Environment & Climate Working Group**

At the meeting on 3 October 2023 the Environment & Climate Working Group agreed to recommend that each committee should have a councillor to consider the environmental impact of items before that committee.

For decision, to resolve on the recommendation.

### 15.3 **Terms of Reference** (Pages 45 - 58)

To receive the report of and approve the Terms of Reference for the Environment and Climate Working Group.

Existing Terms of Reference and Draft Climate Strategy also attached.

## 16. **Events Working Group Notes**

To receive the notes of the Events Working Group meeting held on 5 October 2023 [Link to notes](#)

## 17. **Melksham Community Support (MCS) Service Project** (Pages 59 - 70)

To receive reports for April to June 2023 and July to September 2023..

## 18. **Operation Awake** (Pages 71 - 76)

To note.

## 19. **Melksham Carnival**

For resolution.

Melksham Carnival Group have requested that the 2023 grant be rolled over to 2024.

Finance, Administration and Performance Committee at the meeting on Monday 20 November 2023 resolved to recommend to Full Council that 2023 grant be rolled over and added to 2024 Major Grant.

## 20. **Appointment of a Representative to Wilts & Berks Canal Trust**

To appoint a representative to the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust following the resignation of Colin Goodhind as a councillor.



## Melksham Town Council

### Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on Monday 30th October 2023

#### **PRESENT:**

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

**IN ATTENDANCE:** One member of the public was present and one member of the public was present virtually. One member of the press was present.

<b>OFFICERS:</b>	Linda Roberts	Town Clerk
	Hugh Davies	Head of Operations
	Andrew Meacham	Committee Clerk
	Heather Parks	Locum

#### **Public Participation**

Ian Cardy

Questions regarding the decision to install lighting in KGV.

Is the Procurement Policy shown on the website correct and has it been altered since 2021? The Town Clerk confirmed the policy on the website was correct and the tender limit had changed from 25k to 30k.

Was paragraph 13.2 followed and under what policy was the decision to proceed with the quote from Paul Weymouth made? The Town Mayor confirmed there were not three quotes.

Joe McCann

How much did the Assembly Hall report cost? Head of Operations advised he had not yet received the invoice, but unlikely to be very much.

Any update on the Bike Pump in KGV and Five Bike Ramps? Head of Operations said should be installed with the next two weeks.

Asked a question at the last meeting about the Dog Park and was told would receive a statement. When will he receive this? The Town Clerk advised she hoped to work on it this week but could not say when he would receive it.

Is the Council looking to open an investigation into the deletion of the facebook video from full council and the fact that it was not saved correctly to the council servers. If not does this mean the Council does not take seriously the security of the data that it holds? The Town Clerk confirmed that the only legal record of a meeting is the approved minutes and once approved recordings should be deleted.

Can the Council update on its Strategic Plan 2021-2025? The Town Mayor Councillor S Crundell confirmed it came to council about 18 months ago and it did not receive support.

Does the Council accept the concerns raised in Councillor Goodhind's resignation letter are legitimate and need addressing? The Town Mayor advised that work is ongoing.

Pamela Wiltshire

Could the Council inform the public how much an election costs the Council? The Town Mayor confirmed that the last election cost approximately £9000.

So there is a possibility that during the period of this council £27000 of tax-payers money could be spent on re-elections? The Town Mayor confirmed **that was correct.**

#### **602/23 Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillor Cooke and Councillor Rabey.

#### **603/23 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **604/23 Questions from Councillors**

Questions from Councillor Ellis for full council 30 October 2023

The Town Clerk answered the following questions.

1. Progress on Electronic Communications and Social Media Policy
  - 1.1 Will this policy which was lost from council business on 17th July be brought back?  
**It will when officers have had a chance to review the suggestions received and adapt the model policy which was included in that council agenda.**
  - 1.2 Will any suggested updates be applied prior to re-tabling?
  - 1.3 What policy are our staff working to at present?  
**None, there is no capacity to work on reviewing policies at the present.**

Councillor Ellis asked a follow up question referencing a comment of his on a Town Council Facebook post and its removal. The Town Clerk advised officers work within lawful boundaries. Her explanation was cut short by a further question from Councillor Ellis. The Town Clerk advised that there is a social media moderating policy. Councillor Ellis requested details of this policy. The Town Clerk was unable to assist, having not had sufficient notice and this not being understood to be the aim of the original question.



## 2. Freedom of Information

2.1 Does the Town Council keep a register of Freedom of Information requests it receives?

**Not a register but they are all stored on the network drive.**

The Locum Clerk answered the following questions.

2.2 Does it publish the requests and the responses, and if so, where?

**No.**

2.3 How many requests have been received in the past 12 months?

**Two.**

2.4 How much officer's time has gone into handling FOI requests in the last 12 months?

**Twenty Three hours.**

The Head of Operations answered the following questions.

## 3. Blue Pool and Assembly Hall report

3.1 When will the structural survey and options reports be available to councillors and public?

**Its on tonight's agenda.**

Councillor Ellis acknowledged the reply and appreciated that some of his questions had been overtaken by the subsequent publication of the agenda.

3.2 Have quotations been received for fixing leaks in the AH roof and when will this be done?

**Yes, supplementary agenda item for this evenings meeting, Councillors are requested to decide tonight which contractor to use.**

The following questions were answered by the Locum Clerk

4.1 Are we making an offer on the Cooper Tires site?

**That will have to be a decision of council not an answer for the Clerk, to date no motion to that effect has been received.**

4.2 How are Melksham Town Council providing local support to potential bidders for the Cooper Tires factory site and other land holdings for sale?

**It would be inappropriate for the town council to work with bidders this is very much Wiltshire Council' Economic Regeneration officers domain. That said the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group will be working closely with the team at Wiltshire on a masterplan for the site.**

4.3 Is Melksham Town Council taking any active role in the sales of these sites - for example forming part of a bid group of developers or ecological interests looking to obtain the flood plain?

**This would not be appropriate for the town council.**

4.4 At what point of involvement would/do individual councillors need to declare an interest and have any done so?

**Officers cannot advise councillors when they must declare an interest.**

## 5. Locum Coverage

A locum is by definition a temporary stand in role

5.1 Our current locum is excellent, but when will a permanent setup be provided?

**Once the staffing review is completed.**

5.2 How is cover arranged for leave - do we as a Town Council ensure that at least one of Town Clerk, Deputy Clerk, and Locum Clerk can deal with urgent matters each normal working day?

**Yes in normal circumstances. This year has been unusual in so much as when holidays were booked there was a full staffing complement. On occasion the locum and Town Clerk have had leave booked together, that said, the Town Clerk has always been available whilst on leave and has invariably been contacted whilst on leave to deal with matters that have arisen. Please note the Locum Clerk is not engaged full time.**

The following questions were answered by the Head of Operations

## 6. Allotments

I note an audit being undertaken.

6.1 What are the parameters for the audit?

**An assessment of the number and topography of plots and position of water points, whether they are troughs or taps**

6.2 Are we gathering information from allotment holder and those who want to inform the audit?

**The Allotments officer speaks to tenants on her regular rounds and any comments will be logged as part of the audit**

6.3 When will outcomes be addressed?

**As soon as is reasonably practicable.**

## 7. KGV Park

7.1 When will the inner gate to the dog park be moved to open onto the hard surface?  
End of November / beginning of December.

**If the surface deteriorates before then, we will compact some Type 1 MOT to stabilise the ground in the meantime.**

## 7.2 When will the derelict maintenance shed be removed?

**November**

Questions from Councillor Hubbard

The following questions were answered by the Locum Clerk

At the council meeting held on Tuesday 10th October you replied to a question from a member of the public that you have received confirmation from some organisation that the Dog Agility Equipment was fully safe. I apologise I did not catch the name of the organisation that you said but I would greatly like to go back to constituents who have contacted me with their concerns about the equipment and give them suitable reassurance. Could you please let me have copies of the correspondence with the organisation and details of who they were?

**The Clerk will forward the advice to all councillors this week and will work on a statement for social media. Capacity has held this up.**

Councillor Hubbard asked if he was going to get an answer to that question tonight. The Locum Clerk confirmed he would not.

I have asked for, on numerous occasions since April, the corrected financial reports from 2022/23 that show a proper and accurate breakdown of our spend. To date I have not received copies of these and am very concerned that at the single finance committee meeting at which accounts have been brought in the current financial year we had to postpone agreeing to as they also contained numerous coding errors. **The clerk has confirmed on numerous occasions that the financial reports for 2022/2023 are accurate the Rialtas problem occurred at the beginning of the new financial year which did delay income and expenditure reports for the first quarter.**

Can you please advise me when we will receive the corrected accounts for 2022/23 and the up-to-date corrected accounts for the current financial Year?

**The year end figures for 2022-2023 have been signed off by the internal auditor and council. There are no new figures to present.**

Councillor Hubbard asked a supplementary question. When would council receive accounts for 2022/2023 that accurately represent how the money was spent.

**The Council has signed off the internal and external audit reports and they contained those figures for 2022/2023.**

Councillor Hubbard re-iterated that the figures had not been supplied. The Locum Clerk advised the question had been answered.

Can you confirm if the Internal or External Auditors have been informed of the issues the council has experienced when attempting to produce financial reports that accurately demonstrate its spend?

**The problem with producing the financial reports is an internal matter for Melksham Town Council. The internal auditor does not need to be informed and he has not started his reviews for 2023-2024 yet. As the figures are now up to date, this is not likely to be an issue. The external auditor does not request reports only bottom-line figures. They will also request additional information, such as variances in spend from last year, bank statements and reconciliations. This forms the basis of their inspection.**

Councillor Hubbard asked a supplemental question. Were accounts presented to the internal auditor with a statement that we were confident that those figures accurately reflected the spend of this council. We did not make the internal auditor aware that council had said it had concerns and had refused to accept the final figures at the year end from the RFO and had asked for the matter to be referred to the Finance Committee.

**The internal auditor inspects all of our minutes for the year that they are reported on, so they would have found that information in the minutes.**

What steps have been taken to produce a quarterly detailed variance report as agreed at the Finance and Performance meeting and the subsequent Full Council?

**This has been prepared and included at agenda number 9 tonight.**

#### **605/23 Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings held on 17 July 2023 and 25 September 2023 and the extraordinary meeting held on 10 October 2023, having previously been circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by The Town Mayor Councillor S Crundell.

#### **606/23 EV Charging Points**

This item, number 14 on the agenda, was brought forward to allow Rob Dickin on Joju Charging to speak.

The Town Clerk introduced the item and gave an overview.

Rob Dickinson gave further clarification.

There was discussion on lease agreement with Wiltshire Council, income from chargers and the car parking review.

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

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to ask the Economic Development and Planning Committee to bring forward a costed planned deployment of EV Charging points with reference to the emerging Town Centre Masterplan and the car park survey.

The Town Mayor Councillor S Crundell thanked Rob Dickinson for joining the meeting.

**607/23 Police Report**

This item was brought forward.

Sgt Rutter talked through the report. Theft, violence against the person, public order offences and drug offences have gone down. Burglary and criminal damage have gone up. Culprits have been identified and the investigation is on-going.

A social media campaign has been launched to make people aware of distraction burglaries.

PC Holdsworth has joined the team. PSCO Vicky Rolfe has left the team and is training to be a police officer. A replacement is expected to be recruited in the near future.

The first Wiltshire Police Violence Against Women and Girls Listening Circle was held in Melksham at the Town Hall. Councillor Alford asked how the force reacted to information obtained. Sgt Rutter advised that positive points were re-inforced and negative points dealt with by training and other methods. Councillor Westbrook felt that the issue needed more promotion by the Council.

**608/23 Conclusion of audit year ended 31 March 2023**

Councillor Mortimer was concerned that statements from Cambridge Building Society were only received once a year. The Town Clerk advised that this was savings account and the only items on statements would be added interest. No other transactions were made or could be made without two councillor's being aware.

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

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to approve the final External Auditor Report and Certificate for the 2022/2023 financial year and approve for publication.

**609/23 Town Mayor's Announcements**

The Town Mayor Councillor S Crundell noted the resignation of Councillor Goodhind and thanked him for his service to the Council.

**610/23 Reports from Unitary Councillors**

Councillor Hubbard, Councillor Alford and Councillor Hubbard advised they had nothing to report that affected Melksham.

**611/23 Accounts**

**612/23 Performance Against Budget Report**

Councillor Hubbard expressed his gratitude and noted that the report showed variances only. Explanations of variances in excess of 15% were not always clear or full enough. It would be helpful to be able to identify if overspends and underspends are down to over or under allowance in the budget or other factors.

The Locum Clerk confirmed full figures should and would be provided, not just variances. The Locum Clerk noted that the report was a work in progress and fuller information will be obtained. In as much as she was able at the time, the Locum Clerk responded to some of the specific items highlighted by Councillor Hubbard.

Councillor Westbrook and Councillor Mortimer raised some queries and concerns. The Locum Clerk confirmed work was still being carried out and noted that overall the council was operating within its budget.

Councillor Ellis pointed out a typing error on code 4310.

Councillor Hubbard, Councillor Mortimer and Councillor Westbrook raised concerns on budget process and re-assessment of amounts allocated. The Locum Clerk suggested this could be looked at with the next report.

The Town Mayor Councillor S Crundell thanked councillors for their input and the report was received.

**613/23 Bank Reconciliations**

This item was noted.

**614/23 Appointment of Councillors to Committees**

Councillor Stokes consented to joining the committee.

It was proposed by The Town Mayor Councillor S Crundell, seconded by Councillor J Crundell and

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to appoint Councillor Stokes to Community Development Committee and Economic Development and Planning Committee.

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

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to appoint Councillor Westbrook to the Finance, Administration and Performance Committee.

The Town Mayor Councillor S Crundell asked Councillors to inform the Town Clerk if they felt able to fill open positions.

**615/23     Motion for CCTV in KGV Playing Fields**

Councillor Hubbard spoke to the motion and the opportunity to save money by linking this to the lighting installation.

Sgt Rutter was asked to express an opinion. She said that there were historical issues in the park and CCTV would assist police in any enquiries, as well as acting as a deterrent.

Councillors discussed the siting and direction of the cameras, the need for and effectiveness of CCTV, the monitoring of footage and the cost of installation.

It was confirmed that there would not be any live monitoring and a formal request would have to be made to the Town Clerk for access to footage.

A concern was raised about a camera aimed at the Splashpad. Councillor Hubbard felt it would be of help should a child snatching incident occur and footage would not be available for live viewing.

It was queried whether this motion would negate the CCTV review. Councillor Hubbard confirmed that was not the intent of the motion.

It was proposed by the Town Mayor Councillor S Crundell, seconded by Councillor Alford that the motion be amended so that that cabling be installed in preparation for the CCTV review.

The motion was defeated.

Councillor Hubbard summed up and answered some of the questions that had been asked.

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

**RESOLVED** to approve the installation of 12 additional cameras in King George V Playing Fields. The council instructs the Clerk, and/or her appointed deputies, to arrange the installation of the cameras and associated works at the agreed cost of £4,750 from Kan Connections a known and approved supplier of the council. The capital costs for this project to be funded from the Major Projects earmarked reserve.

Meeting was adjourned for 10 minutes.

**616/23     Motion for WiFi in KGV Playing Fields**

Councillor Hubbard spoke to the motion.

There was discussion on the motion.

Benefits were said to be

- More people using the park and the Cricketers Cafe
- Providing coverage where mobile data coverage is patchy
- Providing a service for people who do not have or cannot afford a mobile contract
- Can include a sign in page with option to opt in to marketing from Melksham Town Council
- Provide a signal for events such as the Food & River Festival where payments by phone has sometimes been an issue because of patchy signal.
- System could be extended to Town Hall to provide a signal in the Market Place

Concerns raised:

- The park should be a tranquil area and an “escape from stress”
- The park should be a space for family time
- There were plenty of places in town offering free wi-fi
- Would prefer to concentrate on Town Hall and Market Place and Cricketers Cafe first
- Leakage of signal outside park area.
- Bandwidth

Councillor Hubbard advised he had spoken to Craig at the Café. He was planning to install a customer only system and it was not for the Council to interfere in how he ran his business.

There may be some leakage of signal but there would be restrictions on usage and inappropriate sites.

Councillor Hubbard summarised the motion and the discussion.

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

**RESOLVED** to approve the installation of 4 Internet Access Points in King George V Playing Fields and an additional Broadband connection to the Pavilion. The council instructs the Clerk, and/or her appointed deputies, to arrange the installation of the Access Points and associated works at the agreed cost of £2,910 from Kan Connections, a known and approved supplier of the council, and to make the necessary arrangements for the installation on a new phoneline.

The capital costs for this project to be funded from the Major Projects earmarked reserve.



The restriction of websites and activities to be determined by the Town Clerk but responsibility would sit with the Community Development Committee

Councillor J Crundell left the meeting at 9:45.

#### **617/23 Local Plan Consultation**

Councillor Aves and Councillor Ellis expressed their confidence in Vaughan Thompson.

Councillor Mortimer left the meeting during this item.

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

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to allocate no more than £1000 to pay for technical support from Vaughan Thompson of Place Studios and to delegate responsibility to Economic Development and Planning to submit Melksham Town Council's response to the Local Plan Review Consultation.

#### **618/23 Bowman Court Lighting**

The Town Mayor Councillor S Crundell advised that one response had been received to the consultation.

Councillor Price declared an non-pecuniary interest as a resident of Bowmans Court.

Councillor Hubbard requested clarification on the height of lights and shielding. It was confirmed that professional advice was that low-level lights would not get enough sun. The committee clerk said he would check and confirm the situation with shielding.

The question of permission from Wiltshire Council was raised. It was suggested that an application LHFIG would be the appropriate pathway.

Councillor Hubbard suggested that Councillor Oatley continue his efforts but suspected that he would be advised to refer to LHFIG.

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

**RESOLVED** to extend the meeting to finish this motion and consider item 16.1.

It was **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to refer the matter to LHFIG with an offer to fully fund any scheme.

Councillor Price left the meeting at 10:05.

#### **619/23 Reports from Head of Operations**

**620/23 Blue Pool**

Councillor Ellis suggested an Assembly Hall Working Group meeting be called. There was discussion on a date. Officers advised they would struggle to find capacity to prepare due to Neighbourhood Plan Consultation and other commitments

Councillor Hubbard felt that the Council should first decide on what they want from the Assembly Hall/Blue Pool site and this would then feed into a decision at a later date on how to achieve.

Other councillors agreed that proceeding on this basis would allow a meeting to take place next week.

It was **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to hold an Assembly Hall Working Group meeting next Monday to discuss what the Council want from the Assembly Hall of the future.

**621/23 Repair of Assembly Hall Roof**

It was noted that the quotes were similar and that it was more important to get the work done as soon as possible.

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

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to delegate authority to the Town Clerk to appoint either of the contractors with the priority being their ability to deliver the work in a timely fashion.

The remaining agenda items were deferred to the next meeting.

Meeting Closed at: 10.20 pm

**Signed:** .....

**Dated:**

## **Virements suggested for important spends that are approaching.**

As of month 6, some savings in the Asset & Amenities budget have been identified at £55,710 year to date.

I have identified below, some areas that will need budgetary input to get best value from the allocated budget.

1. The costs of securing the Town Hall and CCTV room & office door will be £5,460. This will deliver a coded access system so all access / egress will be recorded by individual outside of normal office hours and also give the security that the CCTV room and office requires.
2. A bow top fence will be required to surround the patio area at the new Jacks kitchen facility at KGV. Approx cost £10k if contracted out or £5k if done in house by the onsite team.
3. We have no contingency for the Pavilion project and its likely to be very close to budget. It would be prudent to put a sum aside (I suggest no more than £10k )to cover any additional costs should they arise. Jacks kitchen is preparing a definitive list of remaining items.
4. I would like to contract a staffing management agency to supply a suitably experienced Manager who could put in place all the Assembly Hall procedures including finance and Health & Safety requirements over 2 days per week at £800 per week. I estimate this could be over a period of 8 weeks , and this would keep continuity and provide a seamless transfer to a new Manager. In any event, whatever happens to the Hall / Blue Pool, we will need a new commercially minded leader who can assist to deliver the potential that lies within.
5. A recent inspection deemed the Assembly Hall gas cookers and ovens are no longer serviceable and need replacing. We will need to consider sourcing an electric range (£5k to £8k).
6. The ventilation extract system needs to be replaced with a new steel duct. At time of writing, the cost of this is unknown but quotations will be sought.
7. The two items above may be excessive depending on the outcome of the Assembly Hall / Blue Pool amalgamation discussions.
8. Recommendations on code for KGV drainage - £14628.00  
To decide the code to use for this item of expenditure. The choices are:
  1. Unplanned maintenance
  2. Major projects reserve

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## Biodiversity Policy

### Background

In accordance with the duty imposed on Town and parish councils by Section 40 of the Natural Environment and rural Communities Act 2008, updated by Section 102 of the Environment Act 2021, Melksham Town Council (herein after referred to as the Council) which has many functions exercisable in relation to England must from time to time consider what action the authority can properly take, consistently with the proper exercise of its functions, to further the general biodiversity objective.

This duty also means that town and parish councils can spend funds in conserving biodiversity.

### Diversity

According to Defra (Biodiversity 2020), biodiversity is the variety of all life on Earth. It includes all species of animals and plants – everything that is alive on our planet.

Biodiversity is important for its own sake and has its own intrinsic value. A number of studies have shown this value also goes further. Biodiversity is the building block of our 'ecosystems' that in turn provide us with a wide range of goods and services that support our economic and social wellbeing. These include essentials such as food, fresh water and clean air, but also less obvious services such as protection from natural disasters, regulation of our climate, and purification of our water of pollination of our crops. Biodiversity also provides important cultural services, enriching our lives.

### Aims and Objectives

The object of this policy is to work towards conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of the Council's area.

The full Council and any committee of the Council will consider sustainability, environmental impact and biodiversity when making decisions and will develop and implement policies and strategies as required.

In particular, the Council will aim to improve the biodiversity of the area in the following ways.:

- Consider the potential impact on biodiversity represented by planning applications.
- manage its land and property using environmentally friendly practices that will promote biodiversity.
- support local businesses and council operations in the adoption of low impact/nature positive practices.
- encourage and support other organisations within the town to manage their areas of responsibility with biodiversity in mind.
- support residents and local organisation activities to enhance and promote biodiversity.

## **Actions**

### **Planning applications**

The Council will:

- when commenting on planning applications, support site and building design that benefits biodiversity through the conservation and integration of existing habitats or provision of new habitats.
- support protection of sensitive habitats from development and will consider whether the development would mean the loss of important habitats for wildlife in respect of all applications.
- consider what each proposed development might make in terms of biodiversity net gain.
- Include policies in support of biodiversity within the neighbourhood plan.

### **Land and property management**

The Council will:

- Carry out a biodiversity audit of its landholdings.
- Consider the conservation and promotion of local biodiversity with regard to the management of its open spaces. This will include adopting beneficial practices with regarding to cutting and removal of vegetation, application of chemicals and timing of maintenance work, paying attention to the Government's regulations for plant protection products.
- take special care in the specification of grounds maintenance contracts to ensure that the work, whilst reaching acceptable standards, does not harm the natural environment.

- Source sustainable materials when procuring supplies for the Council's use.
- consider biodiversity issues and the implementation of changes when managing its buildings.

## **Local community**

The Council will:

- raise public awareness of biodiversity issues, including through its website and newsletters.
- engage with local businesses and residents regarding biodiversity in the community and how members of the community can assist and make a difference.
- where feasible, involve the community in biodiversity projects on its land including for example tree planting, wildflower meadows, birdbox making.

## **Partners**

The Council will work in partnership with other organisations to protect, promote and enhance biodiversity within the council area.

It will review any local nature recovery strategies, species conservation strategies, or protected site strategies in respect of local Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and consider how it may become more involved in implementing the strategies' recommendations.

## **Monitoring**

This policy was adopted on (Minute reference yy) and will be reviewed in two years or sooner should legislation dictate. A summary of how the policy has been implemented will be published annually, with reference to the original biodiversity audit to show progress.

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## Draft Model Action Plan

Site/objective	Action	Outcome	Target	Reporting/Publicity
Whole council area	Raise local awareness of biodiversity.	Gain local support for action	Ongoing	Newsletter, social media, website
Protect and support biodiversity	Encourage suitable planting to support biodiversity	Connect and diversify habitats to meet the needs of a variety of wildlife species	Ongoing	Mapping
Closed Churchyard	<p>Additional Planting</p> <p>Maintain and renew bird boxes as required.</p> <p>Adopt a plan to support wildlife and diversity whilst maintaining the site in a way which enables visitors to experience quiet and calm remembrance.</p> <p>Leave leaf litter and dead vegetation where possible as a habitat for invertebrates.</p>	<p>Increased diversity of habitats and food sources</p> <p>Increase cover for invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians, and small mammals.</p> <p>Encouraging insects particularly butterflies and bees.</p>		
Recreation Grounds	<p>Sympathetically maintain hedging.</p> <p>Leave some areas unmown</p>	<p>Food sources and cover</p> <p>Encourages insects.</p>		

## Draft Model Action Plan

Site/objective	Action	Outcome	Target	Reporting/Publicity
	Only use environment friendly pesticides where absolutely necessary and only in ideal weather conditions	Sustain and enhance natural habitats		
Common/other open spaces	<p>Adopt a management plan</p> <p>Encourage residents to remove litter and pick up after their dogs.</p> <p>Work with the principal authority on verge management, favouring biodiversity but noting which areas may need cutting for highway safety.</p> <p>Encourage residents to adopt areas to look after, make clear what is expected e.g., peat free compost and no chemicals.</p>	<p>Sustain and enhance natural habitats</p> <p>Protecting habitats</p> <p>Protecting /enhancing habitats</p> <p>Regular attention</p>		
The Built Landscape	Ensure that planning consultations are considered	Protect/enhancing habitats	Ongoing	

## Draft Model Action Plan

Site/objective	Action	Outcome	Target	Reporting/Publicity
	<p>against the requirement of the Neighbourhood Plan</p> <p>Encourage hedgehog/small animal highways with permeable boundaries</p>	Extending habitats		
Increase community awareness of biodiversity	<p>Ask residents for their view on what they would like to be done to conserve biodiversity within the town.</p> <p>Raise awareness of the importance of gardens as habitats for wildlife, with possible actions highlighted in the Town Newsletters</p> <p>Create a page on the council's website for photographs, information and links.</p> <p>Encourage local farmers to contribute.</p> <p>Provide seed bombs/bulbs etc. for residents' use.</p> <p>Discourage floodlighting.</p>	<p>Engagement/ownership of biodiversity</p> <p>Promote biodiversity</p> <p>Promote biodiversity</p> <p>Promote biodiversity</p> <p>Extending habitats</p> <p>Protect nocturnal animals</p>	Ongoing	Neighbourhood Plan consultation

## Draft Model Action Plan

Site/objective	Action	Outcome	Target	Reporting/Publicity
Support Community Projects	<p>Support hedge/tree planting in any appropriate areas.</p> <p>Work in partnership with schools to develop young people's awareness of the environment around them.</p> <p>Consider events and offer volunteering opportunities to support biodiversity, working with local organisations.</p>	<p>Extending habitats</p> <p>Promote biodiversity</p> <p>Promote biodiversity</p>		

## Biodiversity Duty

### Introduction – Statutory duty

Under the 2-21 Environment Act, public authorities (including town and parish councils) operating in England must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

Government guidance published on 17 May 2023 clarifies that, as a public authority, town and parish councils must:

- Consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- Agree policies and specific objectives based on their consideration.
- Act to deliver their policies and achieve their objectives.

Town and parish councils, unlike other authorities are not obliged to publish a report on their actions but the [Government guidance](#) requires all public authorities to complete their first consideration of what action to take for biodiversity by 1 January 2024. They must agree their policies and objectives as soon as possible after this and must reconsider the selected actions within five years of completing their previous consideration, or more frequently if they choose.

To comply with the guidance, town and parish councils could as a minimum:

- Have biodiversity as an agenda item for a meeting before the end of 2023.
- Note what action they are already taking to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- Agree what further steps they should take to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

Such steps may include:

- Reviewing what biodiversity or nature recovery plans are already in place from other local authorities, e.g., potential for jointly supported wildlife corridors.
- Making contact with local voluntary groups working on nature conservation.
- Carrying out a biodiversity audit of council landholdings and/or the whole council area, potentially involving residents in a [‘BioBlitz’](#)
- Gathering expert advice
- Gathering expert advice on possible actions in support of biodiversity, such as from [Caring for God’s Acre](#) and the [Eco Church initiative](#) in respect of churchyards.
- Drafting an action plan that covers action that the council will take itself as well as support for the actions of other local bodies.

Whatever action is agreed, as a minimum local councils could ensure they address biodiversity concerns when commenting on planning applications.

Linda Roberts  
Town Clerk

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## MELKSHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Town Hall, Market Place, Melksham, Wiltshire SN12 6ES

Tel: 01225 704187

Email: [townhall@melkshamtown.co.uk](mailto:townhall@melkshamtown.co.uk)

### ORDER

BTA Architects

No: 4984

Budget Nominal Code: Major Projects  
Reserve to be reimbursed once S106  
received

Date: 04/10/2022

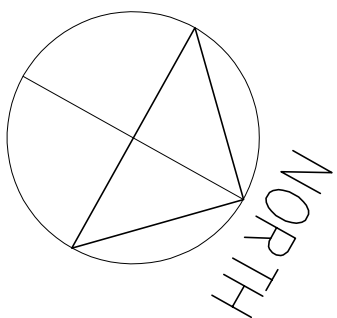
Quantity	Description	Unit Cost / £	Total / £
	Works up to and including the submission of the reserved matters planning application for the proposed east of Melksham community centre	3,630	3,630
	Ecological Appraisal	2,000	2,000
	Topographical Survey	895	895
		<b>SUB TOTAL</b>	6,525
		<b>VAT</b>	1,305
		<b>TOTAL</b>	7,830

Authorised by Patsy Clover – Deputy Town Clerk

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REV	DATE	BY	AMENDMENT
-----	------	----	-----------

CLIENT  
EAST MELKSHAM PARISH COUNCIL

PROJECT  
PROPOSED COMMUNITY CENTRE  
OFF VERBENA COURT  
EAST MELKSHAM  
SN12 7GS

DRAWING TITLE  
PRELIMINARY PROPOSAL  
SITE LAYOUT AS PROPOSED

SCALE  
1:250 (E1 A1)

DATE  
APRIL 2021

JOB AND DRAWING NUMBER  
221003/04

AUTHOR  
IB

REVISION



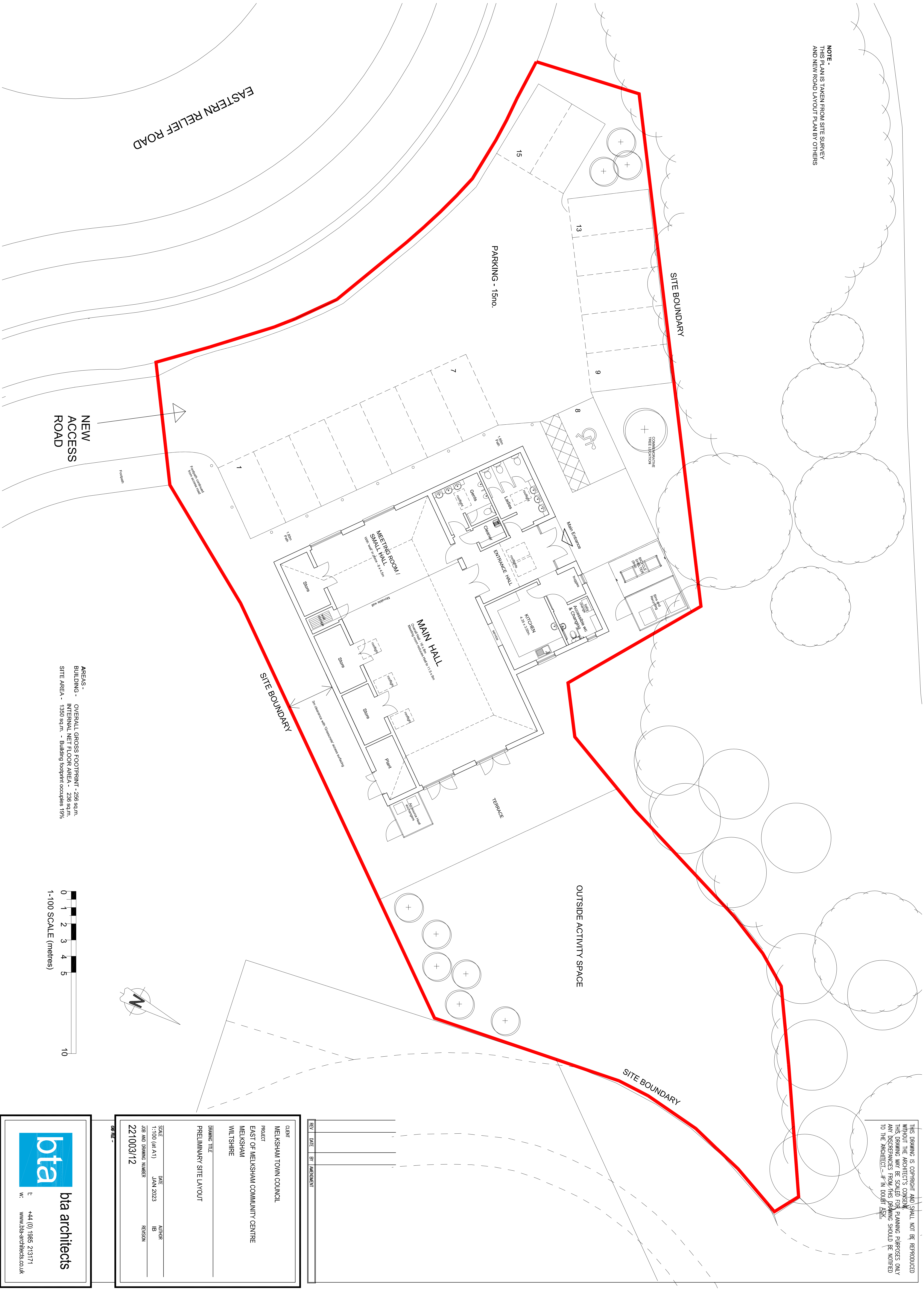
t: +44 (0) 1865 213171  
w: www.bta-architects.co.uk

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NOTE -  
THIS PLAN IS TAKEN FROM SITE SURVEY  
AND NEW ROAD LAYOUT PLAN BY OTHERS



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## **Blue Pool – Assembly Hall – Options appraisal by Architects**

1. Following the Council's decision to appoint an architect the Town Clerk immediately sought advice from the Town Council's Project Management team at MEA to ensure good practice and to adhere with the town council's procurement policy.
2. They have advised the following:
3. To include all of the town council's estate, town hall and 31 Market Place.
4. They will approach three architects to quote for carrying out an options appraisal based on an outline brief which MEA will prepare based on the information provided. They will invite three suitable architects (namely, Bolingbroke, NVB and Pritchard) to submit fee proposals. To be issued w/c 27 November, following the Council meeting. Fee proposals are then returned to allow selection before Christmas. The work will then be carried out in January/February.
5. They have requested title plans or site layouts that cover the four properties as these will need to be in the briefing papers. (provided)
6. MEA will carry out the PM part of this work for the council up to the selection of the architect, for a lump sum fee of £1,000 plus VAT. MEA are the professional experts and are highly experienced in this work with a proven track record of working with councils on similar projects so understand the legislation we must work to.
7. Once the architect is on board, we can provide PM leadership/support to the process and also provide some QS input to advise on the likely cost for each of the options. I suggest that we carry this out using hourly rates alert with a cap of £1,500 plus VAT.

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**MELKSHAM TOWN COUNCIL**  
**MEETING OF THE FULL COUNCIL**  
**30 October 2023**

***Refreshment of the Splashpad surface***

**Report of the Head of Operations**

**1. Purpose of the report**

To evaluate the possibilities of covering the concrete surface of the splashpad and remove the feature rocks.

**2. Current Situation**

The Splashpad was again extremely successful this summer with over 3500 recorded visits despite the generally poor weather.

**3. Background**

The Splashpad opened in the Summer of 2020 for a limited period and has not been enhanced since opening. At the beginning of the season, we had to close the Splash pad for a few days to replace some of the grey mastic between the concrete pad expansion channels.

**4. Financial implications**

We have a cost for two optional new surfaces to cover the concrete area. They are both the same price at £22,232.43 less 15% discount total **£18,897.57**. Our regular Splashpad maintenance provider can offer a one off 15% discount if they can carry out the works this Autumn while the weather is still favourable. One surface is Wet Pour which is porous and the other is a non-porous system that is easier to keep clean – see attached documents below

**5. Links to Town Council policies and core values**

The enhancement would brighten up the facility, in line with the works that are being completed on the Pavilion and the wider park area.

**6. Risk assessment**

There are no risks associated with this proposal as long as the material is laid to specification. In fact, it will actually reduce cuts to feet from the concrete surface.

**7. Crime and disorder implications**

N/A

**8. Biodiversity considerations**

N/A

**9. Safeguarding**

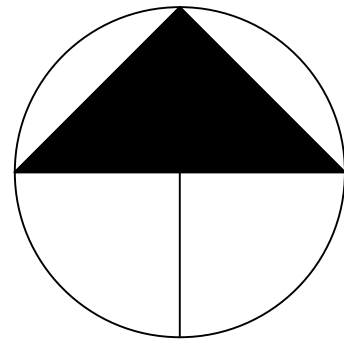
N/A

**10. Recommendations**

That Councillors consider the value for money and level of expenditure required to enhance the Splashpad experience for residents.

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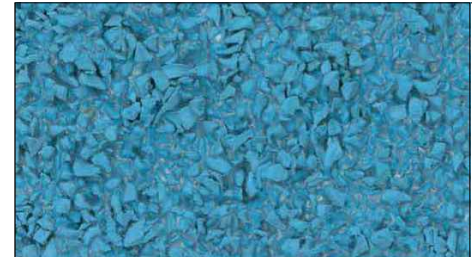


NORTH

0m

5m

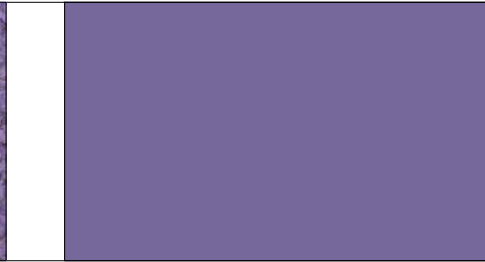
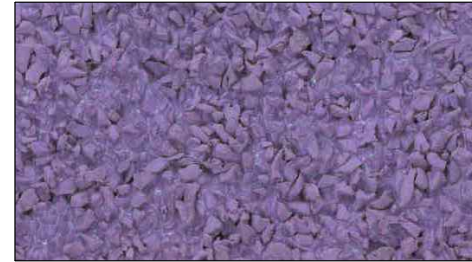
TOTAL WETPOUR: 117.33m2



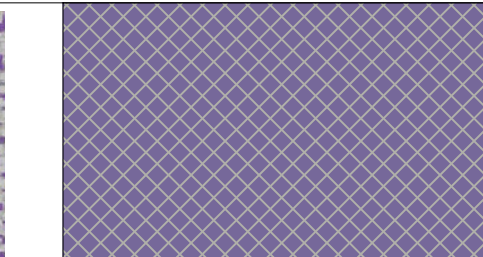
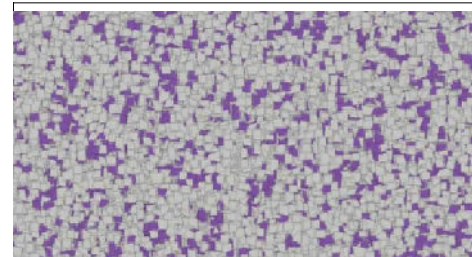
084 - BRIGHT BLUE RAL:5012 80%  
064 - BLUE RAL:5015 20%  
=25.98m2



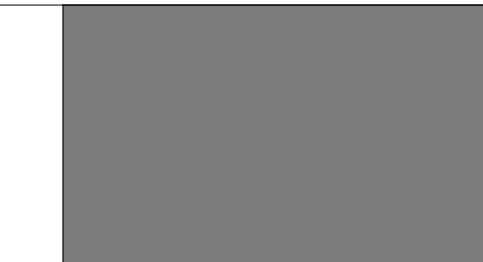
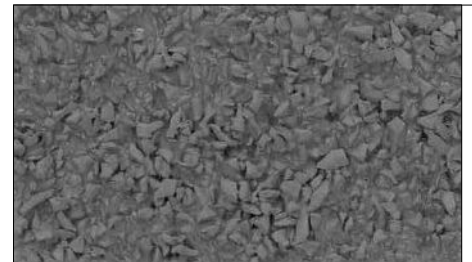
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RAL:5010



044 - LILAC = .37m2  
RAL:4005



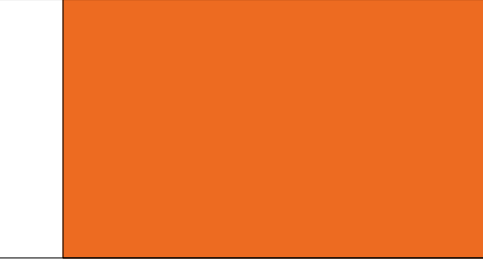

065 - GREY RAL:7038 80%  
044 - LILAC RAL:4005 20%  
=1.98m2



055 - MIDDLE GREY = 3.2m2  
RAL:7037



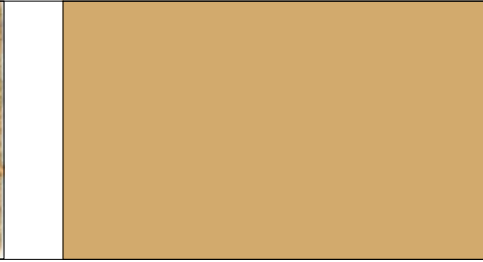

087 - BRIGHT GREEN = 77.8m2  
RAL:6017



083 - BRIGHT ORANGE = 1.31m2  
RAL:2008

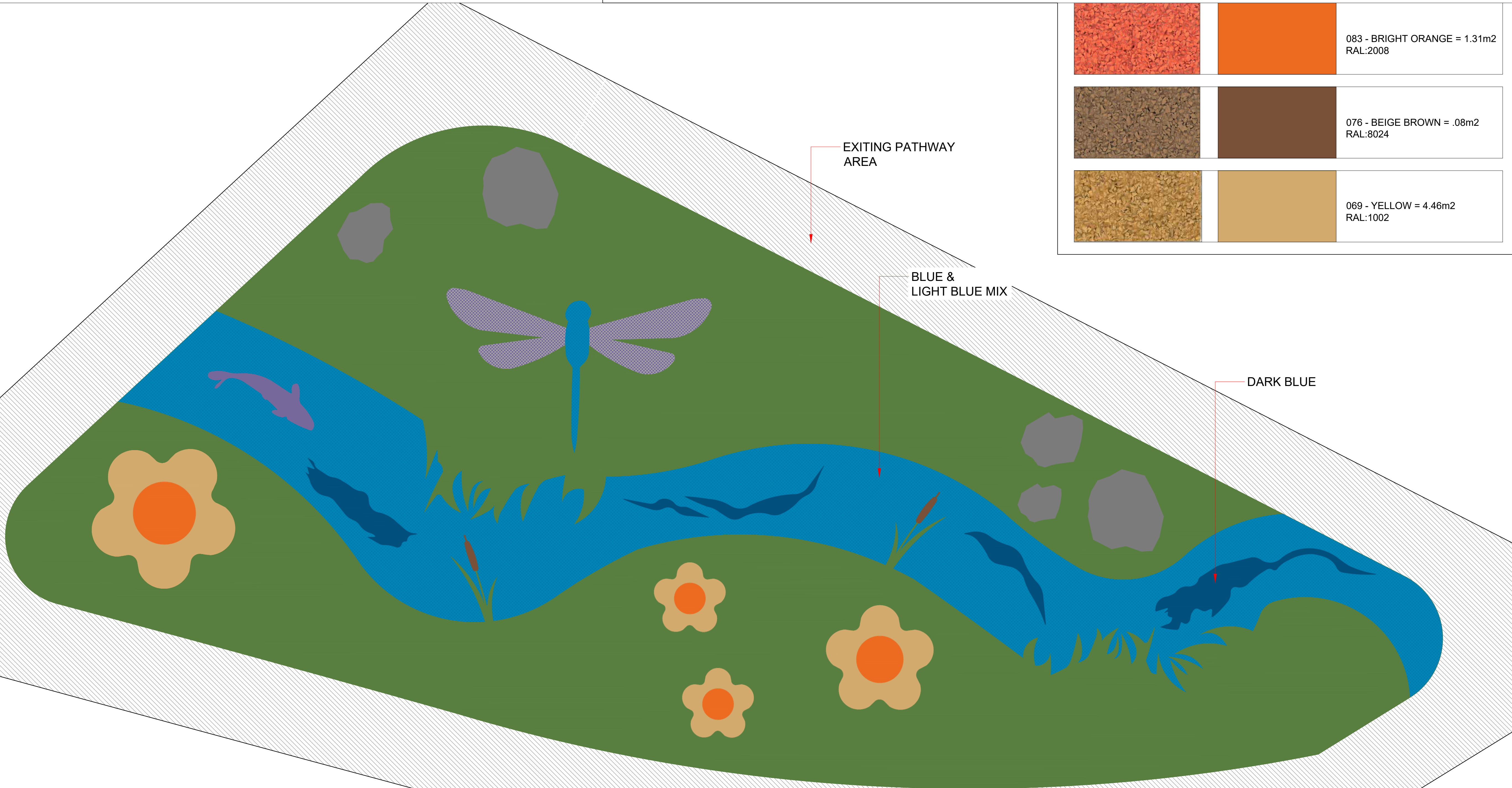


076 - BEIGE BROWN = .08m2  
RAL:8024



069 - YELLOW = 4.46m2  
RAL:1002

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- GENERAL NOTES
1. Refer to Architects and Structural Engineers drawings for details and specifications.
  2. Dimensions to be checked on site before any works are put in hand or prefabricated.
  3. Figured dimensions shown are in millimeters.
  4. This drawing is to be read in conjunction with the relevant Technical Specifications and the Contractors working drawings.
  5. For purpose of construction, this drawing must not be scaled. Only written or calculated dimensions should be used.
  6. The position of all equipment/features is approximate as shown. The precise positions shall be agreed on site with other trades and Architects scaled layouts.
  7. This is not an installation drawing. The contractor shall carry out his own design & installation drawings in accordance with all Tender contract documentation.

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B	15.09.23	Wetpour Added
A	01.04.19	Revised Layout
REV	DATE	DESCRIPTION

FOR APPROVAL

DO NOT SCALE FROM THIS DRAWING



Splash Pads  
Enterprises Ltd  
5 Doolittle Yard  
Flitwick Bedford,  
MK45 2NW  
t 03335770188

Client  
Melksham Town Hall

Job Title  
King George V Park

Drawing Title  
Surfacing Layout

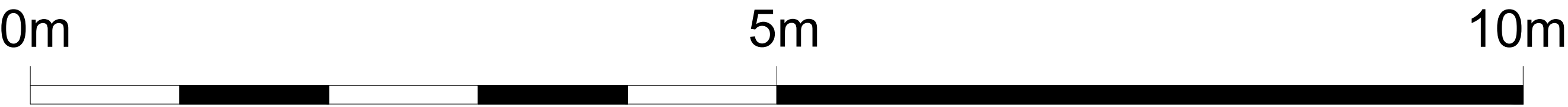
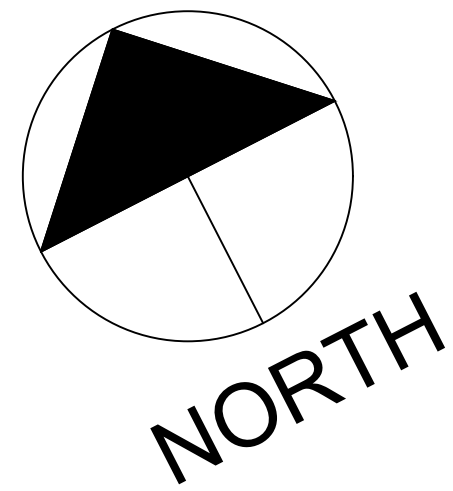
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Drawn by: JG      Approved by: GS      Rev: B

Scale: 1:30@A1      Date: 03.09.18



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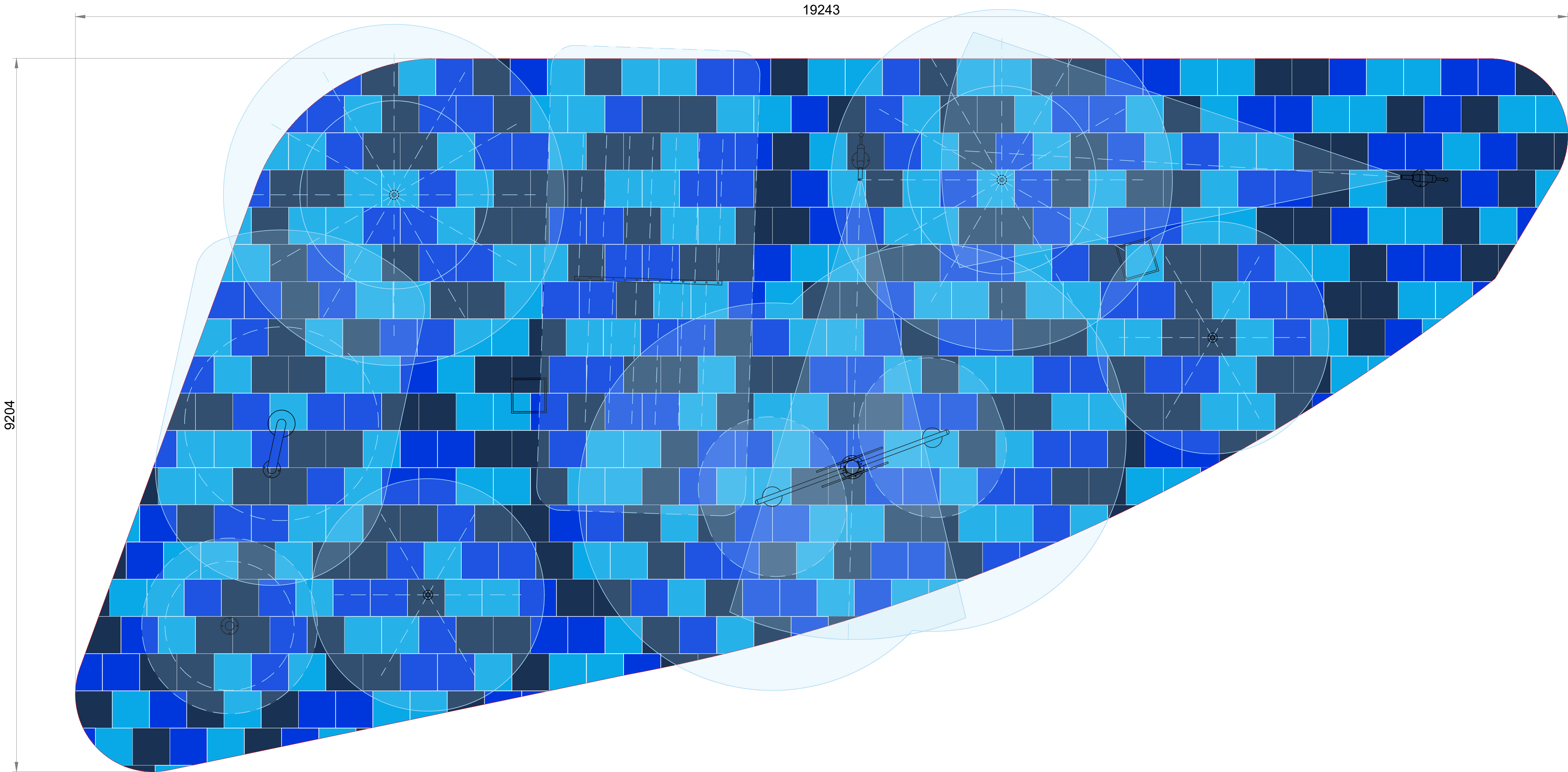
COLOUR: ROYAL BLUE 333



COLOUR: CYAN BLUE 598

TOTAL GOMY FLOOR:  
QTY: 549 GF-001 480x480x10mm TILES  
AREA: 117.33m2

Page 37



- GENERAL NOTES
1. Refer to Architects and Structural Engineers drawings for details and specifications.
  2. Dimensions to be checked on site before any works are put in hand or prefabricated.
  3. Figured dimensions shown are in millimeters.
  4. This drawing is to be read in conjunction with the relevant Technical Specifications and the Contractors working drawings.
  5. For purpose of construction, this drawing must not be scaled. Only written or calculated dimensions should be used.
  6. The position of all equipment/features is approximate as shown. The precise positions shall be agreed on site with other trades and Architects scaled layouts.
  7. This is not an installation drawing. The contractor shall carry out his own design & installation drawings in accordance with all Tender contract documentation.

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A	21.09.23	GOMY FLOOR OPTION
REV	DATE	DESCRIPTION

FOR APPROVAL

DO NOT SCALE FROM THIS DRAWING



Splash Pads  
Enterprises Ltd  
5 Doolittle Yard  
Flitwick Bedford,  
MK45 2NW  
t 03335770188

Client	Melksham Town Hall		
Job Title	King George V Park		
Drawing Title	Surfacing Layout Option 2		
Drawing Number: MT/C01/KGV/003B			
Drawn by: TF	Approved by: JG	Rev: A	
Scale: 1:30@A1	Date: 21.09.23		

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## MELKSHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Proposed by: **Tom Price**

Seconded by: **Jennie Westbrook**

Dated: **19.11.23**

### **Purpose of the motion**

To implement a policy on how the council live stream, share and store recorded council videos

### **Background (Including previous resolution/s made and date/s if applicable)**

Council has recorded and shared council meetings consistently for several years now allowing members of the public to both engage with the council from outside the council hall but also allowing interested residents to 'go back' and watch a council meeting. As the provision for recording meetings came in as an emergency measure during Covid, no official policy or agreement from council has ever been resolved in terms of keeping recordings for posterity. There have been recent occasions where council meeting recordings have been removed, so as to ensure that there are no misunderstanding, mistakes or confusion we need to have a written policy on how council recordings are handled going forward, with a statutory length of time for keeping them.

### **Current Situation**

We currently record meetings and automatically share them in Facebook.

### **What financial implications are there?**

None

### **How does the motion link to Town Council policies and core values?**

Accountable - We are accountable to the residents with council decisions  
Transparent – Sharing and keeping videos up for residents to see the decision making process is essential for a truly transparent and democratic council.

### **What risks are there? (Provide a risk assessment)**

None

### **What crime and disorder implications are there?**

None

### **What environmental and biodiversity considerations are there?**

None

### **What safeguarding concerns are there?**

None

### **. Motion**

o record and share all full council, committee and subcommittee meetings (excluding confidential sessions) to Facebook and for those videos to be kept online for no less than eighteen months after the meeting.

. **Does the motion impact/ support any previous decisions of council?**

None

. **Confirmation that the item under consideration has not been discussed by Council within the preceding six months. If it has, has there been a material change and what is this?**

A social media policy came to council in July but was deferred and not seen again.

. **Please summarise any specific recommendations you have in relation to next steps**

To approve the above motion, and allow members of the public to see us as a truly transparent and democratic council by giving them access to the decision make process.

**Office Use:**

Date of receipt by Proper Officer:

Date of proposed council meeting  
for motion:

Date/s of relevant resolutions:  
(record full resolution/s here)

Motion accepted by Proper Officer:

Motion rejected by Proper Officer:

Reasons for rejection:




## SOCIAL MEDIA AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION POLICY

### 1. Introduction

The use of digital and social media and electronic communication enables Melksham Town Council to interact in a way that improves communication within the Council and between the Council and the community, businesses, and partners it works with and serves.

### 2.

The Council maintains communication via a website ([www.melksham-tc.gov.uk](http://www.melksham-tc.gov.uk)), Facebook, X, Instagram and email.

### 3.

The Council will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications. Over time the Council may add to the channels of communication that it uses as it seeks to improve and expand the services it delivers. When these changes occur, this Policy will be updated to reflect the new arrangements.

### 4.

The Facebook page is available to provide information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within the town and promote our community positively. The site is not monitored 24 hours a day. We will endeavour to ensure that any emerging themes or helpful suggestions are passed to the relevant people or authorities. Please do not include personal/private information in your social media posts to us.

Sending a message or posting via Facebook will not be considered as contacting the Council for official purposes and we will not be obliged to monitor or respond to requests for information through these channels. Please make direct contact with officers and/or members of the council by sending an email ([townhall@melksham-tc.gov.uk](mailto:townhall@melksham-tc.gov.uk)) or letter. Email accounts are monitored mainly during office hours, and we will reply to all questions sent as soon as possible. An 'out of office' message is used when appropriate.

Communications from the Council will meet the following criteria:

- be civil, tasteful and relevant
- not contain content that is knowingly unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented, or racially offensive
- not contain content knowingly copied from elsewhere, for which we do not own the copyright
- not contain any personal information
- if it is official Council business, it will be moderated by the Town Clerk to the Council
- not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising.

**5.**

In order to ensure that all discussions on the Council Facebook page are productive, respectful and consistent with the Council's aims and objectives, we ask you to follow these guidelines:

- be considerate and respectful of others - vulgarity, threats or abuse of language will not be tolerated
- differing opinions and discussion of diverse ideas are encouraged, but personal attacks on anyone, including the Council members or staff, will not be permitted
- share freely and be generous with official Council posts, but be aware of copyright laws; be accurate and give credit where credit is due
- stay on topic
- refrain from using the Council's Facebook page for commercial purposes or to advertise market or sell products.

**6.**

We retain the right to remove comments or content that includes:

- obscene or racist content;
- personal attacks, insults, or threatening language;
- potentially libellous or defamatory statements;
- plagiarised material; any material in violation of any laws, including copyright;
- private, personal information published without consent;
- information or links unrelated to the content of the forum;
- commercial promotions or spam;
- allegations of a breach of a Council's policy or the law;

Repeated violation of this policy will result in the user being blocked.

**7.**

Individual Councillors are at liberty to communicate directly with people in relation to their own personal views, if appropriate, copy to the Clerk. Any emails sent to the Clerk or Councillors in their official capacity will be subject to The Freedom of Information Act 2018 and The Data Protection Act 2018. For this reason, councillors are encouraged to use their melksham-tc.gov email addresses to protect their own privacy.

For information or contact details requested through the Town Council's Facebook page, officers will provide the relevant details directly to the enquirer.

These procedures will ensure that a complete and proper record of all correspondence is kept.

- 8.** Do not forward personal information on to other people or groups outside of the Council, this includes names, addresses, email, IP addresses and cookie identifiers.

Councillors are expected to abide by the Code of Conduct and the Data Protection Act in all their work on behalf of the Council and uphold the Civility and Respect Pledge of 10<sup>th</sup> October 2022.



**9.**

As more information becomes available at the press of a button, it is vital that all information is treated sensitively and securely. Councillors are expected to maintain an awareness of the confidentiality of information that they have access to and not to share confidential information with anyone. Failure to properly observe confidentiality may be seen as a breach of the Council's Code of Conduct and will be dealt with through its prescribed procedures (at the extreme it may also involve a criminal investigation).

**10.**

Members should also be careful only to cc essential recipients on emails i.e. to avoid use of the 'Reply to All' option if at all possible, but of course copying in all who need to know and ensuring that email trails have been removed.

**11.**

This policy was adopted at a meeting on ..... and will be reviewed in two years or sooner should legislation dictate.

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## Report from Environment and Climate Working Group to Melksham Town Council October 2023

In November 2019, Melksham Town Council [MTC] set out the terms on which it would work towards carbon neutrality [draft Climate Action Projects attached].

In pursuit of the resolution, in November 2021 A Council Officer attended a webinar arranged by Wiltshire Council but run by the Centre for Sustainable Energy. At about the same time, an Environment and Climate Working Group [ECWG] was set up with both councillor and community members. With input from the Deputy Clerk and the Community Development Officer, ECWG developed the template for evidence-based action on Environment and Climate (which the CSE had promoted at the webinar) into draft Climate Action Projects for MTC 2022-2025 on how MTC could best lower its own and the town's carbon footprint and safeguard and enhance biodiversity.

There was full discussion and input from relevant Council Officers and links made with relevant community groups.

Since that decision, Climate Fest events have been run (October 2022 and Sept 2023), many other actions in the policy paper have been achieved and progress on other headings in the paper has been actively reviewed. A core group of Councillor and community members has, since late spring 2023, met for one hour before the Economic Development Committee to avail itself of Clerk availability without calling on officer resources on an additional night. In addition, between such 3-weekly formal meetings, ECWG has met informally and frequently at premises provided by the Chair, Councillor Ellis. The committed and cohesive group has recently also attracted new members.

How best to improve the immediacy of ECWG's input to the town council and embed Climate and Environmental considerations across everything the town council does has been carefully discussed with the Town Clerk.

Therefore, in light of:

- a) Having a clear policy paper - which it is proposed to formally call the Environment, Climate and Biodiversity Strategic Plan [the strategy], Oct 2022 edition of paper herewith, draft Climate Action Projects for Melksham 2022-2025]
- b) council resourcing
- c) the increasingly clear urgency of acting to avert Climate Change, which reinforces the importance of addressing the issue in all the town council does
- d) how ECWG has been, and is, operating

It is requested that the ECWG report direct to Full Council and that its Terms of Reference be amended to include the following:

- *to adopt a comprehensive approach to reducing CO2 and other greenhouse gases and to safeguarding and enhancing the environment; to include energy-saving, the transition to renewables, sequestration of CO2, waste/recycling, pollution, food/land use, biodiversity (flora and fauna), green spaces and transport*
- *to bring the latest, authoritative research to bear in all deliberations, recommendations and activities and to update the Council's Strategy accordingly for approval by council*

- *to ensure that all official Melksham town council policies and actions conform to national policy on Climate and Environment, in particular, the Climate Change Act 2008*
- *to support Wiltshire Council's efforts to meet its goals of carbon neutrality by 2030 and of seeking to make the County Carbon Neutral by 2030*
- *to make recommendation to full council concerning MTC policy, as necessary, in line with the emerging Wiltshire **Local Plan***
- *to work in line with all development and structure plans on a local and national level*
- *insofar as resources permit, to accomplish the steps set out in the Strategy, adopted in ..... and to report regularly, with both hard and soft information to Full Council, on progress*
- *generally, to try and embed Climate awareness and climate action in everything the Council does and to this end to use our best endeavours to ensure that no MTC Committee is without a councillor member of ECWG*
- *to engage the public as widely and fully as possible and capitalise appropriately on Melksham's vibrant voluntary sector*

ECWG's deliberations are governed by town council's standing orders, terms of reference of the working group

#### Procedural

- 1) Quorum....
- 2) preparation of agendas....
- 3) delegation to officer of authorisation to spend up to ... from Environment budget head
- 4) membership..... and expectations/rules on attendance
- 5) access to Council accommodation
- 6) relationship of informal to formal meetings

## **Working Groups**

*Working Groups set up by Melksham Town Council, Finance Administration and Performance, Planning, Economic Development & Planning and Community Development Committees.*

### **1. Membership**

The chairman of any Committee setting up a Working Group shall be a member of the Working Group. Any other members can be appointed and so can non-elected members of the public or any other representative from a properly constituted body.

### **2. Delegated Business**

The Working Group has delegated authority to discuss and debate items as specified by the parent committee in a brief which should be minuted:

- 2.1. No Working Group shall have powers to make decisions on policy or budget commitment.
- 2.2. Recommendations shall be put before the relevant parent committee for ratification
- 2.3. Agendas shall be put together by the Clerk's office in conjunction with the Chairman.
- 2.4. Meetings of Working Groups will not necessarily be open to the public but all minutes will be available once adopted by the parent committee.
- 2.5. Minutes of the Working Groups will be made available to all members and the general public on request. They will be prepared by the Clerk's office unless other arrangements have been made.
- 2.6. The general ToR's can be expanded for any working group if required to enable the completion of a project. Any additional ToR will be adopted by the parent committee.

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## DRAFT Climate Action Projects for Melksham Town Council - 2022-2025

Blue text - added after ECWG meeting from other sources

The action plan is organised along the 13 Change Targets in green, from the Centre for Sustainable Energy. Following a day long event on 16 November 2021 with WCE and the CSE, with representatives of Town Councils across Wiltshire, an extensive template was created, which has been considered and reduced to actions appropriate and realistic for Melksham Town Council by a small task group and then the wider Environment and Climate Working Group of Melksham Town Council.							Quick Win - in 3 months. Manageable - in 6 months. To explore - in 12 months. Aspirational - at some point
Number	WHAT	WHY	HOW - Actions to take	WHEN	ESTIMATED COST	ESTIMATED HOURS	PROGRESS
0	GENERAL IDEAS						
0.1	Update Council procurement policy to include sustainable choices and requirement for green credentials	Lead by example	Include requirement when purchasing / replacing equipment to choose most sustainable and environmentally responsible options, including buying electric vehicles and tools where possible, recycled paper, refillable products, no single use plastics and purchasing second hand equipment where appropriate. Include a phrase asking for the organisations' explanation of steps they have taken to become carbon neutral. Could copy from WC	Quick Win			2 In progress
0.2	Create an annual Melksham climate champion award / Promote Carbon calculators and award for % of reductions achieved	Celebrate and reward environmental responsibility	For groups, individuals and businesses who have made improvements to address the climate emergency, similar to Melksham in Bloom - maybe copy someone else - ask WCA. Create a method of measuring the difference made. Could be awarded at the Mayor's Reception with Civic Awards	Manageable	£50.00	20	
0.3	Get a carbon footprint study/ energy audit of council assets and properties		Can get a thermal imaging camera - get advice from CSE. Tackle the worst offenders contributing to climate change within the organisation. Investigate free EPC ratings.	Aspirational	?		
0.4	Hold a climate/ Ecological crisis day for town	Showcase examples	Invite reps from sustainable energy companies etc. WWT, Blue Heart campaign etc. Consider producing a guide/ booklet for guidance. Demonstration events for techniques, energy, solar, EV, cycle to work schemes, tap water being just as good as bottled, repairing things etc. Invite someone who can advise residents how they can reduce their fuel bills and make their homes more energy efficient. As well as the climate change agenda it could support people struggling with huge energy bills. Arrange for Herman Miller and others to show other businesses what is possible. Create a booklet in conjunction with the day -where to recycle, tips etc.	Manageable in September 2022	£600.00	40	Maybe September 2022
0.5	MTC Grants policy - Include a section to Score grant recipients on environmental credentials and waste reduction targets	Strong environmental messaging and encouragement	Similar to procurement policy/sustainability requirements. Require an environmental policy like we require safeguarding	Quick Win	£0.00	1	
0.6	Review the Melksham in Bloom competition to make it greener	Strong environmental messaging and encouragement	Include and score highly environmental responsibility in all categories	Quick Win	£0.00	2	
	Assess opportunities for small scale seed financing of climate-change related innovations						
1	1. BUILDINGS	We must eliminate energy wastage from buildings	by insulating, draughtproofing, improving glazing and shutters, using efficient appliances, and changing patterns of behaviour				
1.1	Create a sustainable Town Council estate		Draft proof and insulate all Town Council buildings. Retrofit, install heat pumps. May be grants for this so keep an eye out for opportunities as they become available. May need a consultant.	Aspirational			A building condition report has been carried out and the costs would be significant - would need a sinking fund.
1.2	Install solar panels on Town Council buildings		Bath and West Community Energy are looking for roofs to install solar panels on. Keep an eye on schemes as they become available.	Aspirational			New shed in KGV will have solar panels to power lights in the park - with absence
1.3	Ensure new Town Council buildings are built with energy efficiency			Ongoing			in progress
1.4	Collect rainwater off the AH and TH roof		May need a soakaway	Aspirational			could be done on new shed in KGV
2	2. ENERGY MANAGEMENT	We must smooth our patterns of energy demand	and match them to patterns of zero carbon energy generation and storage such as batteries				
2.1	Change MTC building lights to LED		Invest now to save costs in future. If not possible to replace all, at least switch to LEDs as they need replacing. Could give away old bulbs to be reused if a big replacement is carried out.	Ongoing			Already Hugh's policy to replace with LED when they go

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Number	WHAT	WHY	HOW - Actions to take	WHEN	ESTIMATED COST	ESTIMATED HOURS	PROGRESS
2.2	Install smart meters in Council buildings	Helps staff to be mindful, and helps the National Grid be more efficient with energy delivery	Might be able to encourage good habits without smart meters?	Manageable			
	Meet Warm and Safe Wiltshire to explore project opportunities						
3	<b>3. DECARBONISED POWER GENERATION</b>	We must stop burning fossil fuels and incinerating waste to make electricity					
3.1	Work with local business to get solar panels installed		letter from MTC highlighting people who want to find roofs	To explore			
	Explore Local Energy Generation		Work closely with WC				
4	<b>4. DECARBONISED HEAT DELIVERY</b>	We must stop burning fossil fuels to generate heat					
4.1	Manage heating better in Town Council buildings		Increase awareness and responsibility of staff for managing heating by turning heaters down in rooms not in use.	Quick Win	£0.00		
4.2	Heat pumps for Town Council buildings		Get advice on installing ground or water source heat pumps (investigate using water in the well in the Market Place)	Aspirational			
5	<b>5. TRANSPORT</b>	Reduce cars on the road	We must reduce the number of private vehicles on the road, and the miles that they drive, and increase the efficiency, availability and reliability of public transport				
	Explore feasibility of town centre hub for deliveries to businesses and public						
	Explore how cars and trucks can be handled if they were redirected out of the town centre						
	Explore options/implications to create town centre as a clean air zone and pedestrianise						
	<b>PUBLIC TRANSPORT</b>						
5.2	Promote Public Transport use in Melksham	Encourage Public Transport use	Support the work of groups such as MTUG, Transwilt with the active travel group on WCA to promote buses and trains in Melksham. Use the planned virtual hub to promote through timetables and things to do	Ongoing			
5.3	Support the improvement of public transport in Melksham	Encourage Public Transport use	Work with MTUG, Transwilt etc	Ongoing			
5.4	Encourage car sharing/ cycling / public transport use for Council staff and Councillors	Reduce car use	Put a reminder at the end of invites to meetings	Quick Win			
	Explore working with providers to run a 'free bus day'						
	Keep MTC bus shelters clean, attractive and informative						
	Work with bus/train providers to improve frequency and reliability - consider on-demand public transport. Expand use by young people, make accessible and affordable						
	Explore Shuttle Bus from employment areas, funded by businesses						



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Number	WHAT	WHY	HOW - Actions to take	WHEN	ESTIMATED COST	ESTIMATED HOURS	PROGRESS
	Review placing of bus stops for convenience, ease of access and safety						
	Campaign for better bus design - electric, comfortable, better suited to country roads and passenger numbers						
	Rail - Work with Bypass team on plans for link station to town centre						
	MTC to have a policy stance on Devises Gateway and consider implications						
	<b>WALKING/ CYCLING</b>						
5.5	Produce/ distribute walking and cycling maps for residents	Encourage walking and cycling	Work with TIC and relevant groups on existing maps and promote on virtual hub	Manageable			
5.6	look out for legislation to create an organised scooter scheme/ electric bike share scheme			Aspirational			
5.7	Cycle to work scheme	Reduce car use	Cycle to Work Scheme allows employees to get a loan from the council to purchase a bike. They pay it back through their salary each month.	To Explore			
	Set up a group to focus on cycle signage and maps						
	Work with WC/ Canal team on cycle link to Lacock						
	Explore Air Quality Changes by removing Motor Traffic from Bank St/ High St						
	Research best practice of workplace travel plans and promote to local companies						
	Identify Community Group to explore outdoor exercise, including model along lines of our.parks.org						
	Audit availability of benches etc and propose a network across Melksham						
	Plan core walking routes to boost 20 minute town. Extensive maps and signage						
	Review pavements for safety and introductions of more benches						
6	<b>6. ELECTRIC VEHICLES</b>	Reduce Fossil Fuel use	A complete shift to electric vehicles (& an end to petrol & diesel cars & vans)				
6.1	Switch council vehicles and tools to electric		Research other towns	Aspirational			
6.2	Support installation of new EV charging points and promote them		We should make Melksham the most friendly electric vehicle town.	Ongoing			Working with WC on audit of possible locations
7	<b>8. PLANNING</b>	Reduce Carbon emissions	We must ensure that all new buildings do not contribute to future carbon emissions, and preferably that they make a net-positive contribution (i.e. generate more energy than they use).				
7.1	Support development of sustainable buildings		Through the planning process and NHP. Include a presumption in favour for renewable applications. Consider drainage and travel with new buildings	Ongoing			
	Make inputs in support of greener transport to local, regional and national consultations.						

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Number	WHAT	WHY	HOW - Actions to take	WHEN	ESTIMATED COST	ESTIMATED HOURS	PROGRESS
	Encourage public transport and greener businesses to locate here						
9	<b>9. CONSUMING (BUY LESS AND REUSE MORE)</b>	Reduce waste	We must be more mindful of what we buy and why we buy it, keep resources in use for as long as possible, and extract maximum use from them before disposal				
9.1	Require environmental responsibility of contractors, partners and suppliers at Council events		Discourage selling/ awarding unsustainable prizes. Don't allow single use bottles/cups etc	Ongoing	£0.00		
9.2	Work with other councils to share equipment		cherry pickers, street sweepers etc	Ongoing	£0.00		Already contracting out jobs that require big machinery
9.3	Set up a library of things		Where people can borrow one off items like waffle makers, sewing machines, power tools - <a href="https://thethingery.com/">https://thethingery.com/</a> . Could be in the Roundhouse?	Explore			
10	<b>10. RECYCLING</b>	Reduce waste	Greatly increased recycling rates to achieve a circular economy model, taking plastics out of the waste stream - We must get recycling rates up to a minimum of 65% of all waste collected, and we must not incinerate plastic (which is a fossil fuel)				
10.1	Become a Terracycle drop off point at the Town Hall		Terracycle collect items that aren't usually recyclable. Will need good promotion and information for the community.	Ongoing	£0.00		
10.2	Investigate more sustainable planting options for the Town Council floral displays		Already committed to doing - could ask Gardener's Question Time for specific advice	Quick Win			Already looking into this for 2022 summer planting
10.3	Set up a Community Clear Out Day		Could be in Market Place - people bring things they no longer need that other might want on ONE DAY. What remains at the end of the day goes to recycling centre. Or This could be town wide initiative where unwanted items are placed outside homes (on a specific day). The Assembly Hall, community halls and schools could also be drop off/exchange points. This again stops travel and forcing people to use cars. We would have to involve Wiltshire Council due to unwanted items to clear away at the end. Could also encourage yard sales.	To explore			
10.4	Review all council practices and procedures to include responsible waste management			Manageable			Already switched from taking green waste to Calne - now deposited by river
10.5	Replace TC town centre litter bins with dual recycling bins		TC only own 8. Need to ensure waste is collected and disposed of properly - need to liaise with WC	Aspirational			Problem is people contaminating the bins with dog waste
10.6	Hold a recycled Christmas Tree competition	Educational	Work with schools, to be displayed in the Market Place before Christmas	To explore			
10.7	Reduce paper use			Ongoing			Already gone paperless
10.8	Work towards becoming a plastic free town		Example in Penzance - <a href="https://plasticfreepz.co.uk/">https://plasticfreepz.co.uk/</a> . Address all the takeaway plastic containers.	Aspirational			Wessex Water point installed in 2021
10.9	Set up a community compost scheme		Learn from Thornbury - <a href="https://mythornbury.co.uk/thornbury/thornbury-community-composting">https://mythornbury.co.uk/thornbury/thornbury-community-composting</a>	Explore			
	Install eco toilets		Known as the Zero Range, these toilets are operated without electricity, water or sewage hook up.	Manageable			Looking to install two units in KGV
11	<b>11. DIET</b>	Reduce food waste	We must reduce the amount of meat that we eat, and waste less of the food we buy				
11.1	Set up a Community Fridge		Maybe in a phone box? ask Bradford. 'Feed bellies not bins'. CO-OP are interested	To Explore			
11.2	Set up a community orchard		See Planting Strategy	To Explore			
12	<b>12. LAND MANAGEMENT</b>		Widely adopted land management practices that reduce emissions, increase soil carbon and protect & promote biodiversity				

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Number	WHAT	WHY	HOW - Actions to take	WHEN	ESTIMATED COST	ESTIMATED HOURS	PROGRESS
12.1	Review of Town Council parks and green spaces		Do we need lots of play parks competing with each other. Could some be meadows and planting opportunities? Review of parks can include how we could share the space with biodiversity. Look at all the land we own and how best to plant on it - <b>see separate planting strategy</b>	Quick Win			Review to take place in February half term to ascertain use of 13 MTC play areas
13	<b>13. CARBON STORAGE (planting)</b>		<b>We must plant and manage more trees, protect and restore peatland, and use more timber in construction</b>				
13.1	Develop a joined up biodiversity strategy with WC, WWT, MWPC and Environmental groups, connecting with the woodland and wetland corridors identified in the NHP		<b>SEE SEPARATE PLANTING STRATEGY</b>	Manageable in autumn 2022	£15,000 in the budget		Planting Strategy meeting to take place February 2022 to coordinate all planting schemes for planting in autumn
13.2	Hold a residents planting programme again as part of Jubilee Celebrations in 2022 - trees, rewilding		It was extremely successful last time we did it. Could be 'plant a tree for the Jubilee' with one main tree in KGV with a plaque explaining it and QR codes with more info	Manageable in autumn 2023	£500.00	25	for autumn - tree for Jubilee
13.3	Work with Melksham Goes Wild to Promote the Blue Heart Campaign - publishing a town "blue heart trail"			Manageable			
13.4	Hold a planting day/ week		Combine planting trees with wildflower/ seed bombs, asking people to dedicate a small patch of their gardens	Explore			
13.5	Use peat free compost for Council planting			Ongoing			
14	<b>14. COMMUNICATION</b>						
14.1	Created a co-ordinated series of messages throughout the year, repeated across the following channels:		<b>SEE SEPARATE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY</b> Needs to not be preachy or nagging, take care with messaging. Around 50 messages have been identified	Ongoing		1 hr per week	
14.2	Project messages on to the town hall		liaise with Christmas Lights Team	Ongoing			
14.3	Regular column or feature in the Melksham News		26 per year	Ongoing			
14.4	Regular weekly social media posts highlighting specific things people can do to be climate friendly			Ongoing			
14.5	Create an Environmental blog			Ongoing			

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# Melksham Town Council

## Environment & Climate Working Group

### Terms of Reference

(November 2019)

## Background

1. In 2018 the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concluded that avoiding catastrophic climate breakdown requires “rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society”. It is incumbent on all of us, including Melksham Town Council, to do our part to meet this challenge.
2. At the Town Council meeting of 24<sup>th</sup> June 2019 the following was resolved:-
  - *To support Wiltshire Council in its efforts to meet the County-wide goal of carbon neutrality by 2030*
  - *To ensure that all official Melksham Town Council policies and actions conform to Wiltshire Council’s decision regarding the climate emergency and to seek carbon neutrality by 2030*
  - *To seek advice, guidance and assistance from local and national persons and competent bodies where necessary to review current and future Melksham Town Council policies and activities to ensure that they conform with the best practices in seeking carbon neutrality by 2030*
  - *To craft and enshrine climate friendly/carbon neutrality goals and objectives in Melksham’s policies and procedures with the message of Climate Awareness and Climate Action being embedded in everything the Council does.*
  - *To promote a local awareness of the dangers of Climate Change among our citizens, schools, businesses and local organisations and enlist/support local action which is in conformity with this town’s current and future climate/environmental policies*
  - *To organise an annual Melksham Day of Climate Awareness and Action*
  - *The Clerk to explore becoming ISO 14001 accredited and investigate what policies were within the Wiltshire Core Strategy regarding climate change/home efficiency and bring these back to the Town Council for further discussion.*
3. At the Asset Management Committee meeting of 5<sup>th</sup> August 2019 the following was unanimously resolved:-
  - *To recommend that grass adjacent to Eastern Way on both sides of the road be mowed on a regular basis and that it be explored how areas further from the road could be managed to encourage wildlife.*
  - *To formulate an environmental issues group, reporting back to this committee, with membership being open to all Councillors and members of the public with an interest in this area, drawing up Terms of Reference to be adopted by the group.*

## Objectives

The objectives of the Environment Working Group will be to:-

- Identify where Melksham Town Council may be able to make a positive impact, either directly or indirectly, in reducing damage to or improving the environment in Melksham and its environs
- Make recommendations to the Asset Management Committee on environment related policies and interventions the Council may be able to adopt
- Make recommendations as to how Melksham Town Council can embed the message of Climate Awareness and Climate Action into everything the Council does

## Main Issues

The Working Group will consider the following main issues relating to the environment:-

- Climate Emergency: Reduction of CO2 emissions and measures for CO2 sequestration
- Biodiversity: Measures to improve biodiversity and reduce damage to the natural environment
- Pollution: Improvement of air quality and the reduction of pollution of all types
- Visual amenity and health: Use of managed green space, street trees and other “greening” of the town to deliver social and health benefits
- Waste reduction and recycling

## Definitions

The term “environment” will be construed both in ecological and visual amenity terms.

## Amalgamation of Task & Finish Groups

The Environment Working Group will incorporate and subsume the work previously carried out by the Green Spaces and Tree Planting (& WWI Commemoration) Task & Finish Groups.

## Identified Topics

The Working Group will consider, inter alia, the following topics which have previously been identified:-

- **Tree & shrub planting**
  - Amenity tree planting of “street trees”, primarily in the central areas of the town
  - Tree and shrub planting on appropriate open spaces for CO2 absorption and visual amenity
  - Tree maintenance requirements including need to water recently planted trees in summer

- **Wildflower planting**
  - Suitable locations for wildflower seeding
  - The need to strip nutrient-rich top soil and use of yellow rattle to suppress unwanted grasses
  - The efficient management of wildflower areas, including the machinery and techniques required to regularly cut back and remove dead material
- **Grass maintenance**
  - Improving the standard of and increased regularity of grass cutting throughout the public realm within the town, largely in roadside locations controlled by Wiltshire Council and various Housing Associations
- **Reducing energy consumption** of MTC owned buildings including:-
  - Additional insulation
  - Newer technologies for lighting and fossil fuel heating
  - Use of solar PV and solar thermal technologies
  - Use of heat pumps and other renewable energy technologies
- **Adopting a "zero carbon" standard** for any buildings to be constructed including community centres and Assembly Hall redevelopment
- **Fully electric vehicles** to replace Council vans
- **Green Spaces Policy:** review policy which is currently in draft form
- **Vehicle pollution in the Town Centre:** consider promoting traffic control to reduce volumes of vehicles coming through the town

## Membership of Working Group

Membership of the Environment Working will be open to any Melksham Town Councillor, and invited members of the public or those with relevant knowledge and skills.

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## Melksham Community Support (MCS) Service

### Project report: Q1 - April to June 2023

The project, overseen by Age UK Wiltshire (AUKW) started on 1<sup>st</sup> April, with the following outcomes agreed:

1. Improve the **wellbeing of older people** living in Melksham Town and Melksham Without, by offering support, access to information and practical help.
2. Ensure that support is available to **those who need it most**, particularly those who don't have a support network.
3. Promote the take-up of welfare benefits and access to other sources of **financial support**.
4. Promote and provide **holistic support** tailored to the individual's need.
5. Provide an **evidence base** of future needs.

### MCS phone line

The MCS phone line has been running since the early days of the Covid pandemic, providing a huge amount of practical and emotional support to the Melksham community since then.

The three MCS Call Handlers have been incredibly helpful and supportive during this transition and have continued to take calls from people requesting support with practical tasks. In Q1 there were 23 requests to MCS, averaging 1.8 requests per week:

- 16 prescription collections, repeat and one-off
- 4 shopping
- 3 electric key top-up

### Volunteers

These tasks were completed by seven volunteers, including the three Call Handlers, who often complete tasks if no volunteers come forward. There are 10 regular MCS volunteers who respond to requests sent out to the WhatsApp group.

Alongside the one-off requests made via the MCS phone line, there is also some regular activity, with three volunteers regularly shopping for three MCS clients.

One of the Call Handlers has stepped down but has remained on the volunteer list to respond to tasks. The phone line is currently covered two afternoons a week by MCS volunteers (now AUKW volunteers) and is covered by AUKW staff the rest of the time.

In Q2 the plan is for more of the MCS volunteers to be offered support and training that is offered by AUKW.

## New Senior Project Worker post

As well as taking over the existing MCS service, the project enabled AUKW to appoint a part-time (17.5 hours/week) Senior Project Worker (SPW), specifically to support the population of Melksham, and we were delighted to appoint Sarah Thomson, who offers a wealth of skills and experience from almost 20 years working for the Alzheimer's Society and more recently having worked as a Social Prescriber in Melksham. Sarah joined AUKW in June and had a comprehensive induction, overseen by AUKW's Service Manager, Ginny Cooper, including extensive training; developing procedures and resources for this new project, for example lone working, risk assessment, visit templates; and shadowing other AUKW staff.

A large part of Sarah's work will be visiting people at home for a conversation about what's important to them, agreeing how we can support them to promote a sense of health and wellbeing, providing ongoing support to overcome any practical difficulties they are experiencing, and helping people to access a range of activities and services that help to maintain their independence and connections with their local community. Our holistic, ongoing support tends to fall within these main categories:

- **Falls prevention**— information and help to access aids / adaptations and personal alarms as well as general falls prevention advice. Referrals to seated exercise and falls prevention classes.
- **Finance** – information about benefit entitlement and in particular Attendance Allowance and benefit checks (income maximisation), referrals made to AUKW Information & Advice service where appropriate; the Surviving Winter Grant discussed with eligible clients and onward referrals made with support to complete the application.
- **Socialisation** – information and support to access activity, social groups, day centres and telephone befriending. During her first month Sarah gathered together a wealth of information about local services and activities which might be of interest to MCS clients. Rather than simply signposting someone to activities or groups in their area, people often welcome an 'active referral' where we will offer to walk alongside people while they gain confidence, travel with people for the first visit, or attend with the client on the first couple of visits.
- **Independence** – support to apply for a Blue Badge, care needs assessments, Lasting Power of Attorney, gardening, handyperson, domestic, meals provision, local LINK schemes and the Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service campaign.
- **Wellbeing** – support to access bereavement services, support to address feelings of anxiety about a health condition, given help to access health services such as audiology, support for carers, support to get out and about
- **Melksham Emergency Support** - Sarah will be asking people whether they would like to be on the list for Melksham Emergency Support and the priority register.

In Melksham we will also be exploring how MCS volunteers can support people, either with short-term tasks (for example, help to sort paperwork) or longer-term



support (for example, companionship; walking alongside someone as they engage or re-engage with their community).

As the quarter ended we had identified ten people who have been regular users of the MCS phone line in recent months, and towards the end of the quarter Sarah had been contacting these people to offer a home visit. We were looking forward to finding out more about how we could support these people, including exploring how best people could be sustainably supported with prescriptions and shopping. Sarah has contacted the pharmacies in Melksham to find out what they can offer people who are housebound, with no family support and no internet access, and has had a positive response.

### **Promotion**

We took a cautious approach to promotion during Q1, while we were recruiting and training the Senior Project Worker, and while she offered support to current regular MCS users as a priority. We have been working on exciting plans to promote the service more widely in Q2, making sure Sarah's time can be focused on those who need support most, particularly those who don't have a support network.

We are also promoting our Information and Advice service, which is able to offer support with income maximization, support for family members, information on social care, housing and services for older people.

### **Working in partnership**

Sarah and I attended the Melksham Health & Wellbeing meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> June, and Sarah will attend this meeting regularly in future. I attended the Carer's event on 9<sup>th</sup> June.

AUKW is part of the Integrated Care Board Neighbourhood Collaborative work in Melksham and Bradford on Avon, focused on falls prevention.

### **Other Age UK Wiltshire services**

In Q1 our Information & Advice service advised or supported 47 people (Q1 2022 – 42) living in Melksham.

There were 81 attendances at our Fitness & Friendship Club at Bowerhill (Q1 2022 – 55).

Two people in Melksham receive weekly calls from an AUKW Telephone Befriender, and 18 receive hot meals delivered to their home through our Meals+ service.

Kate Brooks  
Operations Manager  
Age UK Wiltshire

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## Melksham Community Support (MCS) Service

### Project report: Q2 – July to September 2023

The project, overseen by Age UK Wiltshire, started on 1<sup>st</sup> April with the following outcomes agreed:

1. Improve the **wellbeing of older people** living in Melksham Town and Melksham Without, by offering support, access to information and practical help.
2. Ensure that support is available to **those who need it most**, particularly those who don't have a support network.
3. Promote the take-up of welfare benefits and access to other sources of **financial support**.
4. Promote and provide **holistic support** tailored to the individual's need.
5. Provide an **evidence base** of future needs.

People under the age of 60 are included by exception, for example people who have health issues, need support and do not have a support network.

### Referrals to MCS Senior Project Worker

Since taking over the existing MCS service, with extra funding Age UK Wiltshire has been able to appoint a part-time (17.5 hours/week) Senior Project Worker, specifically to support the population of Melksham Town and Melksham Without. In Q1 we were delighted to appoint Sarah Thomson, who offers a wealth of skills and experience from almost 20 years working for the Alzheimer's Society and more recently having worked as a Social Prescriber in Melksham. Sarah joined us in June and had a comprehensive induction, including extensive training; developing procedures and resources for this new project, for example lone working, risk assessment, visit templates; and shadowing other staff in similar roles.

Once Sarah was ready to start supporting people we identified ten people who had been regular users of the MCS phone line in recent months, and Sarah contacted these people to offer a home visit. We were looking forward to finding out more about how we could support them, including exploring how best people could be sustainably supported with prescriptions and shopping.

Referrals for Sarah's support were also received from individuals themselves, Social Prescribers and Care Coordinators from Spa Medical Centre and Giffords Primary Care Centre, and from Age UK Wiltshire's Wellbeing and Information & Advice services. Referrals from other services continue to increase as the service is promoted.

During this quarter a total of **19** people were referred for Sarah's support. There were **81** contacts with or on behalf of clients, and Sarah supported people with **75** different issues.

## Home Visits

A large part of Sarah's work is visiting people at home for a conversation about what's important to them, agreeing how we can support them to promote a sense of health and wellbeing, providing ongoing support to overcome any practical difficulties they are experiencing, and helping people to access a range of activities and services that help to maintain their independence and connections with their local community.

At the first home visit Sarah has a Guided Conversation with the older person to help identify any difficulties they may have, the support that is needed and what someone would like to achieve. Age UK Senior Project Workers are fully trained to have Guided Conversations and very experienced in conducting these with older people, in a conversational way which helps people to feel at ease. All aspects of someone's daily life are covered from when they get up in the morning to going to bed at night. We cover domestic issues, personal care and other care needs, health, socialisation, financial needs and their support networks. The Guided Conversation is never hurried and is taken at the person's preferred pace, sometimes over more than one visit. This ensures the person is put at the centre of the conversation and their whole needs are addressed.

## Activity in the Quarter

The support provided by Sarah falls into five categories, and this table shows the number of issues handled in each category during Q2 (more detail below):

FINANCE	SOCIALISATION	INDEPENDENCE	UTILITIES	WELLBEING
5	10	20	2	38

**Finance** – Sarah gives initial information about benefit entitlement and in particular Attendance Allowance and will refer people to the expert advice provided by Age UK Wiltshire Information & Advice team for a full benefit check to ensure income maximisation. Age UK Wiltshire also works with Wiltshire Community Foundation to help distribute the Surviving Winter Grants for people in fuel poverty., Sarah supports eligible clients to make an application.

Examples of the type of financial help offered during Q2:

- Help identify and make a claim for Direct Payment for carers break. Sarah has supported clients to contact Carers Support Wiltshire and apply for a direct payment so that she could spend the money on a much-needed carer's break for herself whilst her partner was cared for
- Making referrals for information about benefits such as Attendance Allowance and referral to Age UK Wiltshire Information & Advice for support to apply for this benefit. Sarah has helped clients to complete the preliminary forms for this benefit application. She will then follow up once an award has been made to help the client find the best way to use this extra financial support to help them remain independent.
- Referral to Age UK Wiltshire Information & Advice for support and advice re new energy plan, smart meter and boiler plan. Age UK Wiltshire advisers are able to talk through the options available to clients and support them to make a decision



- Referral to SSAFA for support to claim partner's pension. Through a guided conversation with a client Sarah identified that a client was unable to access her partner's pension and helped her to contact the relevant person at SSAFA who is supporting her to make a claim
- Surviving Winter Grant application forms supplied and support to complete given by Sarah

**Socialisation** – information and support to access activity, social groups, day centres and Age UK Wiltshire Telephone. Referrals and support to attend Age UK Wiltshire Fitness & Friendship clubs in the area. Support given to resolve transport issues.

Examples of the type of support offered during Q2:

- Help to attend Fitness & Friendship club. Sarah discusses travel arrangements with clients. She will then meet the client at the F&F group to ensure they feel confident about attending and are able to do so independently
- Fitness & Friendship information provided for the client as a future option.
- Referral to Age UK Wiltshire's Telephone Befriending service
- Referral to Silverline telephone number. The Silverline Helpline is a free telephone service from Age UK just for older people. They provide friendship and support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Shared list of activities and groups in Melksham. Sarah has extensively researched what is available in the MTC and MWPC areas. Many of these activities have been visited by Sarah so she can let people know what to expect
- Gave information on Melksham Free Dining
- Shared information on carer support groups and Carer Expo. Sarah has referred clients to Carers Support Wiltshire for additional support

**Independence** – support to apply for a Blue Badge, care needs assessments, Lasting Power of Attorney, gardening, handyperson, domestic, meals provision, local LINK schemes and the DWFRS (Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service) campaign. Support to manage medication order and delivery independently.

Examples of the type of support offered during Q2:

- Information and support given on pharmacy delivery and reordering service and discussed pharmacy delivery options to save money. Sarah actively supports clients to arrange a reorder and collection service that they can manage independently without worrying about not getting their medications on time
- Pharmacy pick-up and delivery for those unable to manage themselves. Sarah will always either do this for a client or arrange for one of the MCS volunteers to do so
- Building confidence in changing pharmacies to one that can deliver reliably. This is a new step for some clients and Sarah will support them until they are confident to manage this by themselves
- Information shared on shopping / meals delivery. Clients are supported to find a shopping solution that suits them. Sarah will go through this with the client and support them to feel confident with whichever way they choose to manage this
- Contact details / information given on local cleaners, together with support to engage someone to help with this



- Gave information on and discussed Age UK Wiltshire Meals+ service and helped to set up. Sarah spends time with the client to discuss different meal options and helps them to make the best choice for their needs
- Age UK Information Guide - Thinking about End of Life sent to a client
- Information given on local food delivery services. Sarah has researched what is available locally so that she can give clients up-to-date information on the choice available for food delivery
- Shared information on Blue Badge application and supported clients to apply. Sarah has supported clients to make an application online, taking a photo for them and uploading this to their application
- Provided information on local traders: Window cleaners, gardeners and decorators from a list Sarah has compiled following her own research
- Support to remove many collapsed cardboard boxes and packaging to recycling centre. Sarah has been encouraging client to engage and actively help with this task

**Utilities** - support to top up energy key and to manage independently. Support around installation of smart meters

- Support to charge electric key independently
- Support to have smart meter fitted – client able to top up independently online
- Client encouraged to discuss smart meter with provider and not rely on what he had been told via hearsay

**Wellbeing** – support to access bereavement services, support to address feelings of anxiety about a health condition, help given to access health services such as audiology and vision. Support for carers. Support to pursue hobbies/interests. Help to care for pets.

Examples of the type of support offered during Q2:

- Age UK Wiltshire Guide to Later Life given
- Celebrating Age Art Workshop information given. Sarah spoke about upcoming events to clients, discussing how these could be accessed and providing support to attend when needed
- Crazy about Knitting information given. Support given as above
- Crafts, Cuppa & Chat details given. Sarah has met clients at these events so that they see a familiar face on entering. This helps with the confidence needed to attend a new activity
- Gave information on Carer Support Wiltshire and encouraged clients to register with them. She discusses the benefits of registering as a carer. Sarah has developed a good working relationship with Cares Support Wiltshire
- Gave contact details of U3A - University of 3rd Age
- Gave a booklet on Managing Anxiety to further support discussion on this that she has had with the client
- Shared Cinnamon Trust number with a client needing support to look after a much-loved pet
- Shared information on Bereavement course in Melksham and encouraged clients to attend these courses to help with their own bereavements





- Sent links to Sue Ryder website
- Volunteers have shopped for clients when they are unable to do so themselves
- Volunteers have collected prescriptions when clients have been unable to do so themselves
- Discussed SSAFA Forces help and the support they can give ex service men and women and their families. Sarah has built good relationships with SSAFA to help with referrals for Melksham Community Service clients
- Support in gaining confidence to sort out delivery boxes. Sarah has researched the best way to support this client and has been actively involved

### **MCS phone line**

The MCS phone line has been running since the early days of the Covid pandemic, providing a huge amount of practical and emotional support to the Melksham community since then. In Q2 there were 13 (Q1 – 23) requests to MCS, averaging 1 request per week:

- 7 prescription collections, repeat and one-off
- 4 shopping
- 2 electric key top-up

The number of requests made to the MCS phone line has reduced in this quarter, as regular callers to the phone line have been offered additional, holistic support. The requests that were made for support to collect prescriptions from the pharmacy and for help to top up utility keys were tasks that we have supported people to manage for themselves. This is a more sustainable solution and the client is more in control of the situation. At Age UK Wiltshire we aim to support people to be able to live independently. Often a request for support for a task that can be managed independently is a symptom of other support that is needed, and it is this other support that Sarah has talking to people about and helping them to live well in later life as shown in the Activity section of this report.

### **Melksham Emergency Support**

To date everyone who has been supported by Sarah is on the Emergency Register. New people referred to the project are informed about the register and asked if they would like to be included.

### **Volunteers**

During Guided Conversations and further conversations Sarah is exploring how MCS volunteers can support people, either with short-term tasks (for example, help to sort paperwork) or longer-term support (for example, companionship; help with practical tasks). We can walk alongside someone as they engage or reengage with their community, helping people to find the appropriate transport for them to get to an event/activity etc. safely and confidently, and can attend alongside someone until they feel happy to do so without support.

Of the three MCS Call Handlers, who have been incredibly helpful and supportive throughout, two have now stepped down but have remained on the volunteer list and continue to support Melksham residents in this scheme.

In July we held a Volunteers Coffee Morning to meet the volunteers who have been supporting MCS. Six volunteers were able to attend. We talked about the service and about what it would mean to become an Age UK Wiltshire volunteer.

### **Pharmacies in Melksham**

Sarah contacted the pharmacies in Melksham to find out what they can offer people who are housebound, with no family support and no internet access. She now has a good knowledge of those which deliver and the cost of this service. She has supported people to manage their prescription orders and deliveries independently and we continue to support those who cannot manage this at the moment.

### **Promotion**

We had taken a cautious approach to promotion during Q1, while we were recruiting and training Sarah, and while she offered support to current regular MCS users as a priority.

In this quarter we have begun to promote the service more widely, whilst still making sure Sarah's time can be focused on those who need support most, particularly those who don't have a support network.

Sarah has worked on building a good relationship with local GP surgeries. This is working well and referrals are starting to come from the surgeries for patients needing MCS support. Sarah has visited the surgeries in person and talked to staff about the support we can offer and posted details of the MCS service within the surgeries for both patients and staff alike.

Sarah has begun distributing MCS leaflets around the designated area, starting with sheltered housing, and will be giving talks to interested groups in this next quarter. Sarah will be talking about the Melksham Community Support service to Link Scheme drivers, Melksham Hospital, Bowerhill Lunch Club, Celebrating Age Wiltshire, Melksham Library, Seniors groups, Reading rooms and all other interested groups in the MTC and MWPC areas.

We also continue to promote our Information & Advice service, which can offer support with income maximisation, support for family members, information on social care, housing and services for older people.

### **Working in partnership**

Sarah attends the Melksham Health & Wellbeing meetings and is finding these very useful. Age UK Wiltshire is part of the Integrated Care Board Neighborhood Collaborative work in Melksham and Bradford on Avon, focused on falls prevention.



## Other Age UK Wiltshire services

In Q2 our Information & Advice service advised or supported 69 people living in Melksham (Q1 2023 – 47).

There were 93 attendances at our Fitness & Friendship Club at Bowerhill (Q1 2023 – 81).

Two people in Melksham continue to receive weekly calls from a Telephone Befriender, and a further four have been referred and are on the waiting list.

19 receive hot meals delivered to their home through our Meals+ service. If needed the Meals+ service will plate up the meal for someone in their home.

## Case Studies

Case Study One – Gentleman aged 69 years, living on his own.  
Support commenced on 2.8.23 and is ongoing from both Sarah and a volunteer.

A gentleman who was contacting the MCS number every month to have his prescription delivered and his electric key topped up has been supported to build up his confidence to make changes. Sarah made her first contact at the beginning of August 2023. Initially she worked with the client over the telephone to gain his trust so that he would welcome her into his property to have a Guided Conversation with him. There were many problems with the administration of this client's medications which Sarah worked with him to overcome. She spent some time at the pharmacy ensuring that they had the correct medications for him and that the problems in the past with this prescription did not continue.

Having gained the client's trust Sarah was now able to visit him at home to discuss how best we could support him. Sarah identified that this client preferred to communicate via email and future home visits were arranged in this way.

He is now more confident and independently changed his pharmacy so that he can get his medication delivered. He has also independently contacted his energy supplier and had a smart meter fitted. Now he doesn't need an electric key or anyone to top it up for him. He can do this himself online. He continues to be supported to sort out the amount of packaging/boxes to make his home a safer and nicer place to be. We are helping to take the boxes and the packaging to the recycling centre for him if he collapses the boxes and sorts the packaging. This is going well and is ongoing. This gentleman has reported that he is feeling much happier now and he is feeling more in control of his life. He says he likes having more space in his home.

**Case Study Two** – Gentleman 80 years, living on his own.

Support of this gentleman commenced on 12.8.23. Direct MCS support ended on 29.9.23. The client knows he can call for further support from MCS as he feels it is needed.

A gentleman was referred to MCS due to his isolation and loneliness. After speaking with the

client it became clear that he was in need of support from Adult Social Care and his GP surgery. He told Sarah that he was not eating properly and did not like to cook. Sarah discussed various options to improve his diet and to support him to eat regularly. He agreed that he would like to have a hot meal delivered to his home three or four times a week. Sarah supported him to receive the Age UK Wiltshire Meals+ service and he has been enjoying having nutritious hot meals delivered to his home.

With the client's permission he was referred to his surgery for more support from his GP. Sarah also made a referral to Adult Social Care for an updated needs assessment as this client's needs have increased recently.

This gentleman is now receiving appropriate care and involvement from other services which meet his needs. He continues to have a hot meal delivered to his home and knows he can contact Sarah again for support if needed.

### **Case Study Three – Couple aged 75 and 81 years**

Support commenced 15.6.23. Monthly support is continuing.

Client contacted MCS asking for support to find activities for her husband who has Dementia and for support to claim a direct payment to assist with his care. Age UK Wiltshire had already supported her to help him to make a successful claim for Attendance Allowance. Sarah visited the home for a Guide Conversation and followed this up with a very detailed email giving details of all possible social activities in the area that she and her husband could attend together and activities for him alone. Client was feeling socially isolated and unable to follow activities she was interested in due to her caring commitment to her husband. The client was very grateful for this list and successfully attended some of the activities mentioned.

The client was having difficulty applying for a direct payment. There were many emails and letters that she needed support with in order to receive a payment. Sarah was able to support her with this and guided her through the complicated referral process.

After this support from Sarah this client is finally in receipt of a Direct Payment to support her husband's care, and she and her husband are now accessing various weekly activities. Sarah has also supported her to apply for a Blue Badge. The client reports she is grateful for the help received. Sarah is keeping in contact with this client via monthly emails to check she and her husband are well.

Ginny Cooper and Kate Brooks  
Age UK Wiltshire



Dear Councillor

We are writing to let you know about a partnership pilot scheme **Operation Awake** which aims to provide additional support to local women in public life who are at the receiving end of abusive emails and social media posts. Known as gender abuse, perpetrators in some cases threaten violence, which is often sexual and with deeply upsetting content.

## Background

You may have heard about the Salisbury Women's Safety Initiative, started in March 2021 following the murder of Sarah Everard. This is a partnership between Safer and Supportive Salisbury and Soroptimist International of Salisbury, who have coordinated and led this initiative, seeking to make the city of Salisbury safer for everyone, but for women and girls in particular. We have been working closely with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Wiltshire Police, Wiltshire Council and Salisbury City Council. New themes and ideas for further action are emerging all the time from members of the local community.

## Supporting female councillors in Wiltshire

A local female councillor alerted us to the abusive messages she and colleagues have received. These include abusive emails and social media posts, in some cases threatening violence, often sexual and with deeply upsetting content.

Members of Salisbury Soroptimists learned from female councillors that, unlike MPs, there is no bespoke reporting structure for such abuse for female councillors or women who work or volunteer in public service.

## How the pilot will work

If you telephone 101 to report any such abuse, whether written, verbal or on social media, please quote **Operation Awake** to the call handler. This will route your call through this new mechanism to enable police to analyse such incidents and offences to identify serial perpetrators or inform patrol strategies. The police will also support publicity campaigns and engagement to encourage reporting.

Where appropriate these will be dealt with as crimes and investigated. Where the matter does not meet a criminal threshold for investigation the information supplied will be used to help identify patterns of behaviour and ultimately pinpoint repeat offenders. The aim of this pilot is to gather intelligence to better support patrol strategies and risk assessments of activities and events which include elected representatives. We hope that by building a stronger intelligence picture, the police will be able to deploy resources to proactively target potential perpetrators and prevent offences.

If you would prefer to submit your report in writing, please use [the Wiltshire Police reporting tool on their website](#) and put **Operation Awake** in the subject line. If you prefer to remain anonymous you can use CrimeStoppers on 0800 555 111 or [online via their website here](#), but please do include **Operation Awake** in the content of your report so that it can be used as part of this pilot.

This pilot is closely allied to ***Project Vigilant***, which seeks to build trust and confidence in policing, facilitate relentless pursuit of perpetrators and create safer spaces for women and girls.

Together we aim to make a positive difference to the lives of women in public life and to encourage young women to consider standing for public office and furthering their careers without the shadow of this kind of abuse. We want to say to such abusers – ‘it’s not ok’ to treat women this way!

We do hope you will find this campaign supportive and useful.

Best wishes

Liz Batten

SI Salisbury

DCI Gemma Vinton

Violence Against Women and Girls

Wiltshire Police



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **For immediate publication and broadcast**

**Thursday 6 July 2023**

### **Operation Awake - A Wiltshire Initiative to Support Women in Public Life**

Today Thursday 6 July sees the launch of a partnership pilot scheme to provide additional support to local women in public life who are at the receiving end of abusive emails and social media posts. Known as gender abuse, perpetrators in some cases threaten violence, which is often sexual and with deeply upsetting content.

Members of Salisbury Soroptimists, who have been coordinating and leading a Women's Safety Initiative in the city, learned from female councillors that, unlike MPs, there is no bespoke reporting structure for female councillors or women who work or volunteer in public service.

Liz Batten of the Soroptimist project group said: "We are saying 'it's not ok' to be personally abusive to any woman – but we believe that those women who give of their time and energy to serve their local community deserve to be better protected from this kind of gender-based abuse. We are pleased that Wiltshire Police agreed with us that women should be encouraged to report the gender abuse they receive so that enquiries can be made to identify the perpetrators and assess any immediate risk."

Through ***Operation Awake***, female councillors and other women in public life will be encouraged to telephone 101 to report any such abuse, whether written, verbal or on social media, and to quote ***Operation Awake*** to the call handler. They will ensure that the call is dealt with through this new mechanism. Police will then ensure that incidents and offences can be analysed to identify serial perpetrators or inform patrol strategies and will support publicity campaigns and engagement to encourage reporting. Where

appropriate these will be dealt with as crimes and investigated. Where the matter does not meet a criminal threshold for investigation the information supplied will be used to help identify patterns of behaviour and ultimately to pinpoint repeat offenders. We hope that by building a stronger intelligence picture, the police will be able to deploy resources to proactively target potential perpetrators and prevent offences.

This pilot is closely allied to ***Project Vigilant***, which seeks to build trust and confidence in policing, facilitate relentless pursuit of perpetrators and create safer spaces for women and girls. Together we aim to make a positive difference to the lives of women in public life and to encourage young women to consider standing for public office and furthering their careers without the shadow of this kind of abuse. We want to say to such abusers – ‘it’s not ok’ to treat women this way!

-ends –

### **Notes to editors**

For further information or interviews please contact:

Liz Batten on 07798 878987 or e mail [lizmbatten@gmail.com](mailto:lizmbatten@gmail.com)

Cllr Victoria Charleston on 07971 195626

The Salisbury Women’s Safety Initiative was initially started in March 2021 following the murder of Sarah Everard. A partnership was formed between Safer and Supportive Salisbury and Soroptimist International of Salisbury. The project group has been working closely with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Wiltshire Police, Wiltshire Council and Salisbury City Council. New themes and ideas for further action are emerging all the time from members of the local community.

Together we aim to make a positive difference to the lives of women in public life and to encourage young women to consider standing for public office and furthering their careers without the shadow of this kind of abuse. We want to say to such abusers – ‘it’s not ok’ to treat women this way!

### **Soroptimist International of Salisbury**

The Club was chartered in August 2019 in a ceremony in Salisbury Cathedral and since then Club members have continued to meet regularly and members undertake several projects to make life better for women and girls.

In March 2020 SI Salisbury launched Her Salisbury Story, a Heritage Fund supported project which aims to bring Salisbury’s heritage alive through the celebration of the lives of Salisbury’s women past and present. A website was launched in September 2020 and project volunteers have researched, investigated, recorded, and written the stories of the women of Salisbury



both deceased and living. In 2023 Salisbury Museum used the theme of Her Salisbury Story for an exhibition of some of the women highlighted by the project and in April 2023 a blue plaque was unveiled for Frances Hale, only the fifth in the city to commemorate a woman.

The Club holds an annual fund-raising quiz night in support of EdUKaid and the Salisbury Women's Refuge. Each summer the Club collects 'pre-loved' bras which are donated to Afreebra who transport them to Africa where underwear gives women dignity and self-confidence.

Orange the World is an annual event which runs from 25 November to 10 December - 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence. For 2023, the Club has plans to 'Orange Salisbury' like never before.

### **Safer and Supportive Salisbury**

Safer and Supportive Salisbury is a network of local people and organisations working together towards creating a safe, supportive, and inclusive community for everyone who lives or works in the city and for all visitors to Salisbury and surrounding areas.

Safer and Supportive Salisbury (SaSS) is a totally independent, non-political, not for profit membership networking organisation. Its members all represent local community groups or charities or are active in the Salisbury area as individual volunteers.

The organisation undertakes or facilitates action to influence and shape outcomes that support its aims, fostering a community spirit and make Salisbury and South Wiltshire a better place to live and work.

Safer and Supportive Salisbury raises funds and generates income to help further its aims and actions. The organisation shares, networks, signposts and communicates good practice and research. It promotes events and activities as well as those sponsored, supported or organised by member community groups and organisations.

### **Project Vigilant**

Project Vigilant was launched in Wiltshire in 2021; the operation involves proactive patrols being carried out on a frequent basis to prevent violence and sexual offences against women and girls linked to the night time economy.

It aims to reassure anyone of any gender that they can enjoy their night out without fear alongside targeting perpetrators to show that Wiltshire is not a place where they can commit these crimes.

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