

## **Melksham Town Council**

### **Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on Monday 13th December 2021**

#### **PRESENT:**

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

#### **OFFICERS:**

|                  |                   |
|------------------|-------------------|
| Linda Roberts    | Town Clerk        |
| Hugh Davies      | Amenities Manager |
| Christine Hunter | Committee Clerk   |

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:** Three members of the public and two members of the press were present.

Pam Wiltshire asked:

- would the Council provide an update on when the Friends Garden will be opened to the public, the transfer to the Town Council has been ongoing for many years?
- were Tree Wardens consulted prior to the consideration of planning applications?
- had grants allocated for Party in the Park and Melksham Carnival been returned?
- why was there a difference in cost for the provision of the Christmas tree in the Budget?
- why was there no budget for play areas and tree maintenance in Budget Option 3?
- do the Council intend to rent out the Roundhouse? It was understood that an application had been received to rent the property.
- would the Council carefully consider the impact on local people if they decide to raise the precept? The local average income is lower than the national average, the cost of living has risen and any increase to the precept would cause considerable financial pressure to Melksham residents.
- would the Council consider using more sustainable planting in future?
- would the Council enter into public consultation before a decision is made regarding taking out a large loan?

- would the Council be taking a recorded vote on the decision to take out the loan?

The Town Mayor, Councillor Hubbard, replied that

- the Environment and Climate Working group had been investigating the use of sustainable planting in the town.
- tree wardens had been consulted on planning applications previously. The Committee Clerk was asked to contact the tree wardens to clarify the current position.
- Any unspent/unused grants would fall into the General Reserve at the end of the financial year.
- The Town Council would provide written answers to all questions to Mrs Wiltshire.

#### **217/21 Apologies**

There were no apologies.

#### **218/21 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

The Town Mayor, Councillor Hubbard, proposed moving the Motion from Councillor Mortimer regarding the Cricketers Café to earlier in the agenda to facilitate public participation.

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

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to suspended Standing Orders to allow public participation.

#### **219/21 Motion re the Cricketers Cafe**

Annie Benham-Taylor stated that hundreds of people attended the parkrun every Saturday and that it would be a great use of the empty building to provide them with refreshments, a meeting place and toilet facilities.

The Town Mayor, Councillor Hubbard, reinstated Standing Orders.

Councillor Mortimer spoke to the Motion requesting use of the Cricketers Café until it is taken over permanently; It could be used to provide refreshments for Park Run and to give Councillors an opportunity to meet with residents. Going on to suggest that it could be run by volunteers every Saturday morning from 08.30 until 12.00, involving a small cost for heating and electricity.

Councillor Mortimer advised that she had spoken with the Amenities Manager who had recommended ascertaining the exact costs involved but felt that costs should not exceed £1,000.

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

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to ask the Amenities Manager to organise the opening of the Cricketer's Café early in 2022 on Saturday mornings from 08.30 to 12.00, and to explore the costs involved until the future use of the Café had been decided. The Café would be run by volunteers for the use of participants in Park Run and provide an opportunity for Councillors to meet with members of the public.

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

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to suspended Standing Orders.

Pam Wiltshire asked whether members of the public would have an opportunity to have their say regarding the 2022-2023 budget before it was approved?

The Town Mayor, Councillor Hubbard, confirmed that meetings of the Finance, Administration and Performance Committee and Full Council would be held in January 2022 when members of the public could raise any questions on the budget in Public Participation.

The Town Mayor, Councillor Hubbard, re-instated Standing Orders.

## **220/21 Questions from Councillors**

The Town Clerk read out the questions received from councillors and gave the answers:

- The Deputy Town Mayor, Councillor Goodhind, - "what is the timeline for bringing all the Assembly Hall admin. under the Town Hall and reducing on-site staffing to events, cleaning, maintenance and emergencies?"

*The Town Clerk responded that work was underway on the 34 actions to be taken to get the Assembly Hall on an even keel, which should be in place by the end of March 2022.*

- Councillor Rabey – "at the Town Council meeting held on 25 October the Council resolved to establish a Procurement Group to look at viable options for resolving the issues with the Town Council's AV system. Can you please update the council on the progress made and when this group will actually meet to consider the options?"

*The Town Clerk responded that:*

1. *The following resolution was made at the meeting of Full Council on 25 October 2021:*

*It was proposed by the Town Mayor, Councillor Hubbard, seconded by Councillor Rabey and RESOLVED to instruct the Town Clerk to obtain legal*

*advice from the Town Council's solicitors and to arrange a panel to interview two of the companies before making a recommendation to a future meeting of Full Council for a decision.*

- 2. Following the meeting on 25 October, the Town Clerk had submitted a brief with supporting documentation and a timeline to Wellers Hedley, the Town Council's solicitors.*
  - 3. A meeting was arranged for 25 November 2021 with Craig Batko of Wellers Hedley when he confirmed that the procurement process had been followed correctly and that the supplier had failed to meet their contractual obligations.*
  - 4. A Statement of Particulars of Claim would be prepared by C.*
  - 5. Wellers Hedley confirmed that Melksham Town Council could seek a replacement system or arrange for remedial work to be carried out to the current system. This should be seen as positive action to mitigate the Town Council's loss to date.*
  - 6. Delays in arranging the interview panel for the two contractors had been caused by a lack of response from one. It has been decided not to continue pursuing this contractor.*
  - 7. The remaining contractor had offered a demonstration of their equipment – which had been declined by members.*
  - 8. An interview panel had been arranged to meet with the remaining contractor on 17 December/22 December 2021.*
- The Town Mayor, Councillor Hubbard, – “on 27 July a meeting of the Parks Working Group had explored various options for engaging with the public regarding the town's parks. The meeting had concluded with the agreement that the Clerk would arrange for research into “Friends” groups in other towns and communities and arrange a second meeting of the Working Group to develop further. Can you tell me when that next meeting will be taking place and if the research required has been completed?”

*The Town Clerk responded that:*

- 1. Research with other councils had uncovered some hints and tips for best practice. It had been agreed that members of the Parks Working Group would look into examples of other areas where “Friends Of” groups have been successful. Nothing had yet been reported back to officers and the next meeting of the Parks Working Group had yet to be arranged*
- 2. The research into community pride teams has not yet begun.*

- Councillor Ellis, – “Amended directions for our safety came into play due to Coronavirus, including working from home where possible, and are expected to be passed into law by parliament tomorrow. Town Councillors are all volunteers and some are in more vulnerable groups; with meetings being held purely in person they are being required to make choices between the duties they have taken on and significant risks to their safety. Can you tell us what arrangements are being made to maintain distanced democracy in Melksham as was done during previous phases of Coronavirus? Notwithstanding legal requirements to be present to vote, is it not possible for members to be present, even just on an open phone line, to participate in discussions and make valuable contributions?”

*The Town Clerk responded that:*

1. *The Coronavirus Meetings legislation had not extended beyond 10 May 2021.*
2. *Local Government legislation required members to be present at the meeting, they cannot participate on the telephone.*
3. *Lobbying of Central Government to reconsider had to date not changed Government’s view.*

## **221/21 Minutes**

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

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that the minutes of 25 October 2021 having previously been circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor, Councillor Hubbard.

## **222/21 Town Mayor's Announcements**

The Town Mayor, Councillor Hubbard, thanked Officers and Councillors for their hard work which had made the Christmas Lights Switch On event such a success.

The Town Mayor, Councillor Hubbard, asked Councillors to note that with effect from Monday 13 December 2021 the Town Hall would be run with skeleton staffing, with the remaining staff working from home following recent Government guidelines.

## **223/21 Reports from Unitary Councillors**

Councillor Alford reported on a recent Wiltshire Council Cabinet meeting where a decision had been made to advance the Melksham Bypass project and submit a business case (OBC) to the Department of Transport.

**224/21 Police Report**

The Police Area Board Report for December 2021 was noted.

**225/21 Representatives on outside bodies**

**225/21.1 Operational Flood Working Group**

The update from the Operational Flood Working Group was noted.

**225/21.2 Wiltshire Swindon and Oxfordshire Canal Partnership**

The notes of the Wiltshire Swindon and Oxfordshire Canal Partnership meeting held on 30 September 2021 were received.

**226/21 Accounts**

**226/21.1 Payments**

The Deputy Town Mayor, Councillor Goodhind, asked when the Council would be able to quantify the effectiveness of advertising events in the Assembly Hall.

The Amenities Manager confirmed that the expenditure on publishing reflected in the two invoices included in the payments list, had been incurred prior to him assuming responsibility for the site. The Council was committed to making three further payments of £162 each. All advertising would be reviewed and if ineffective would be terminated.

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

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to approve the list of payments.

**226/21.2 Petty Cash**

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

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to approve the petty cash payments.

**226/21.3 Monthly Financial Statement to 31 October 2021 (Month 7)**

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

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to note the monthly financial statement.

**226/21.4 Detailed Income & Expenditure Report as at 31 October 2021 (Month 7)**

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

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to note the Income and Expenditure Report.

**226/21.5 Earmarked Reserves Year to date to 31 October 2021 (Month 7)**

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

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to note the Earmarked Reserves.

**227/21 Committee Minutes**

**227/21.1 Asset Management and Amenities Committee**

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

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to receive the draft minutes of the Asset Management and Amenities Committee meeting held on 6 December 2021.

**227/21.2 Economic Development and Planning Committee**

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

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to receive the minutes of the Economic Development and Planning Committee meeting held on 8 November 2021 and the draft minutes of the Economic Development and Planning Committee meeting held on 29 November 2021.

**227/21.3 Finance, Administration and Performance Committee**

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

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to receive the draft minutes of the Finance, Administration and Performance Committee meeting held

on 22 November 2021.

**227/21.4      Staffing Committee**

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

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to receive the minutes of the Staffing Committee meeting held on 20 September 2021, and the draft minutes of the Staffing Committee meeting held on 6 December 2021.

**228/21      Working Group Notes**

**228/21.1      Environment and Climate Working Group**

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

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to receive the draft notes of the Environment and Climate Working Group meeting held on 28 October 2021.

**228/21.2      CCTV/Community Safety Working Group**

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

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to receive the draft notes of the CCTV/Community Safety Working Group meeting held on 23 November 2021.

**229/21      Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group**

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

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to appoint Councillor Alford and the Town Mayor, Councillor Hubbard, as nominated substitutes on the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

**230/21      Roundhouse**

The Town Mayor, Councillor Hubbard, explained that a quotation had been received from one contractor for approximately £20,500 excluding VAT for works required to



the Roundhouse. The Amenities Manager confirmed only one of the contractors contacted for a quote had replied.

The Amenities Manager, in answer to a question from Councillor Mortimer, advised that the cost of scaffolding would be approximately £800.00

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

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to appoint Sandridge Stone to carry out the works to the Roundhouse as per their quote at a cost of £20,464.68, the cost of which will be met from the Unplanned Maintenance earmarked reserve. And the proviso that if the scaffolding was more than £1,000 it would be brought back to Full Council for further consideration.

#### **231/21     King George V Park**

The Amenities Manager confirmed that NVB Landscape had been asked to obtain quotes for the provision of a lighting scheme based on an independent specification drawn up by them. The project would cost approximately £50,000.

The Deputy Town Mayor, Councillor Goodhind, stated that other companies provide a design plan as part of the project, which the Council should investigate. Town Clerk confirmed that having a company design the specification independently will ensure lighting providers fit the specification the Town Council has dictated. The Town Clerk explained that if a company produced the lighting specification they would be excluded from tendering for the works.

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

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to ask the Amenities Manager to appoint BJP Landscaping to act as procurement contractors for the design of the lighting scheme at a cost of £7,166 to be met from the 2021/2022 Major Projects budget.

#### **232/21     2022/2023 Draft Budget**

The Town Mayor, Councillor Hubbard, recommended deferring discussion of the 2022/2023 budget allow members a further informal opportunity to discuss the budget, the Town Mayor suggested Monday 20<sup>th</sup> December 2021 . He further advised that the Assembly Hall budget deficit had increased considerably which affected the 2022/2023 budget and needed further debate by the council.

Councillor Alford suggested finalising agreement of the budget at the meeting and a review of the Assembly Hall budget could be done in depth at a later date. Councillors Mortimer and Cook offered to review the Assembly Hall budget to try to identify further savings.

The Town Clerk explained how Budget Options One to Four had been produced.

The Town Mayor, Councillor Hubbard, explained to members that in order to comply with Standing Orders members would need to vote at 10.00 pm whether to close the meeting or remain in discussion.

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

**RESOLVED** that the Council voted to continue the meeting after 10.00 pm.

Concerns were raised regarding the proposal in Budget Options 2 and 3 to take out the loan which would be repayable over a period longer than the lifetime of the assets for which the loan was taken out.

Councillor Mortimer explained that Budget Option 4 proposed using £225,000 of earmarked reserves to support the 2022/2023 budget, rather than taking out a loan, leaving a balance of £320,000 in earmarked reserves at 31 March 2023.

Councillor Price stated he felt he was unable to make an informed decision and that he felt “railroaded” when he and all the Councillors were very tired.

It was proposed by Councillor Alford, seconded by Councillor J Crundell (a recorded vote was requested) and

**RESOLVED** that the precept for 2022/2023 be set at £966,204 with the use of £225,000 from earmarked reserves and that the General Reserve meets any deficit in the Assembly Hall Budget.

Use of the Earmarked Reserves:

- Major Projects Reserves for:
  - Bath Road Toilets £50,000
  - King George V Park Improvements £75,000
  - Other Parks £20,000
- Solar Money for CCTV - £50,000
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) for Other Parks £30,000

A recorded vote was taken:

| Councillor | Absent | For | Against | Abstain |
|------------|--------|-----|---------|---------|
| Alford     |        | X   |         |         |
| Aves       |        | X   |         |         |
| Cooke      |        | X   |         |         |
| Crundell J |        | X   |         |         |

|               |          |          |          |          |
|---------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Crundell S    |          | X        |          |          |
| Ellis         |          | X        |          |          |
| Forgacs       |          | X        |          |          |
| Goodhind      |          |          | X        |          |
| Houghton      |          |          | X        |          |
| Hubbard       |          |          | X        |          |
| Lewis         |          | X        |          |          |
| Mortimer      |          |          |          | X        |
| Oatley        |          |          | X        |          |
| Price         |          |          | X        |          |
| Rabey         |          |          | X        |          |
| <b>Totals</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>8</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>1</b> |

The Town Clerk confirmed that the vote was carried.

It was agreed to close the meeting and carry forward al outstanding agenda items to the next Full Council meeting scheduled for 24 January 2022.

Meeting Closed at: 10.29 pm

**Signed:** .....

**Dated:**