

Melksham Town Council

Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting

on Monday 17th March 2025

PRESENT: Councillor T Price Town Mayor
Councillor S Rabey Deputy Town Mayor
Councillor P Alford
Councillor P Aves
Councillor G Ellis
Councillor A Griffin
Councillor J Hubbard
Councillor J Oatley
Councillor A Westbrook
Councillor J Westbrook

OFFICERS Tracy Predeth Locum Clerk
Hayley Bell Deputy Clerk
Christina Connor Events and Community Development
Andrew Meacham Committee Clerk

1/25 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor S Crundell

2/25 Minutes

The minutes of 25th March 2024, having been previously circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor and Chair Councillor Price.

3/25 Report of the Town Mayor

The Town Mayor Councillor Price welcomed people to the meeting and reflected on the events of the previous year, staff changes and engagement with the community. He thanked everyone who had been involved in meetings, projects and events over the year.

- Youth Advisory Board
- Awdry Avenue Play Area
- Support for restoration work in Canon Square
- Blue Pool Asset Transfer
- Curtailed Christmas event

Moving forward Council focused on community engagement, sustainable development and preserving Melksham's unique character. Encourages all residents to stay involved and help shape the future of Melksham.

4/25 Reports from Chairs of Town Council Committees

Councillor A Westbrook, Asset Management & Amenities Committee

Became chair last May. There was a huge number of on-going projects that Council has now categorised for priority. Councillor Westbrook touched on various events and projects.

- Green Flag Status would put a focus on getting the park finished. Judging will take place in the late Summer . A programme will be put together by the Amenities team
- Community Conversations. Good to work with them for the Forest area.
- Community Allotment in Awdry Avenue, working with Community Conversations. Will provide disability friendly raised beds, new fencing and better access. Hope to extend project to other allotments.
- Wiltshire Towns Programme. Will bring many changes to Town Centre including environmental softening of the Market Place
- New water troughs at allotments and plans to get more allotment plots into cultivation.

Looking forward the new council will have the Asset transfer of the Blue Pool site and the potential for redevelopment. It should be an exciting time for those who are elected.

Councillor Rabey, Economic Development & Planning Committee

Appreciates role as chair of committee and the diverse range of discussions it brings. While most applications tend to be smaller in scope, we have also encountered some larger projects that have sparked meaningful conversations.

- So far in this council year, convened 15 times, considered 68 applications and received informative presentations, particularly regarding the site at Upside and the proposal for the new Gompels warehouse.
- Invite everyone to attend meetings, participate and share your views.
- Close collaboration with MWPC on larger applications. Gratitude to the MWPC members who attend our meetings and consistently provide valuable feedback and insights.
- The Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan continued to be a vital area of focus. Thanks to the working group, particularly Pat Aves and Graham Ellis, for their contributions
- Thank you for efforts of our parish steward, who has been actively addressing the tasks we've requested
- Big thank you to our amenities team for their continued dedication.

- Appreciate the support of my fellow councillors
- Thanks to Andrew for his professional handling of meeting minutes and for being an invaluable resource as committee clerk.

Councillor J Westrook, Community Development Committee

Community Development is not just about events. Often about how council and community can work together – although it is quite largely events!

- Proms in the Park. Looking forward to making a bigger event this year.
- Remembrance Sunday. Good to see the large turn out.
- Christmas Lights sadly cancelled, but streamed live by Melksham News.
- Carols Round the Tree and farmyard animals. Hope to get more schools involved
- Youth Advisory Board. Amazing number of young people invested in future of Melksham
- Telephone boxes. On going project to repair and repurpose. Community input welcome.

In the upcoming year, as well as the usual events, we have the 80th anniversary of end the end of World War II. Planned events include beacon lighting, flag raising ceremony, picnic and traditional fish and chips.

The committee and Melksham Town Council are committed to working with community groups to make sure Melksham thrives.

A big thank you to everyone involved in events – community volunteers, councillors and officers.

Councillor Griffin, Finance Administration and Performance Committee

Figures given on the current state of the budget and the upcoming year.

Staffing is currently over budget because of one off costs due to staff changes

The last round of grants for the year have recently been awarded. A total of £45K in grants have been paid out over the year to about 40 local organisations.

Grants have been received from Wiltshire Council to fund a play area in Forest.

The process for setting and approving the budget for the upcoming year was better than the previous year but there is still room for improvement.

5/25 Reports of Wiltshire Councillors

Councillor Hubbard, Melksham South

Sits as chair of Children's Select Committee, which makes suggestions to and holds the council executive to account.

12 years ago WC received a disastrous OFSTED inspection. This year they were awarded "Outstanding" for its children's services and for SEND services. Congratulations to all involved in this turnaround.

Also sit as member of Local Government Association and vice-chair of Children and Young Peoples Board looking at national policy.

Saddened that his budget amendment for free swimming did not pass.

Councillor Oatley, Melksham Forest

As already stated, Awdry Avenue play area has been refurbished by a grant from Community Conversations, a WC project.

Old library site. Looking at affordable housing for older residents.

Sits as chair of Health and Wellbeing Board. Proud of the work done, especially for mental health.

Councillor Alford, Melksham Without North and Shurnhold

Last Annual meeting before elections so would like to reflect on the last four years. When first became cabinet member for housing WC was about to open the Community Campus.

Was concerned about buildings sitting empty. Pushed for development. Contract just signed for old library site and plans will come out after the election.

Blue Pool transferred to Town Council. Challenges with the building but location next to Assembly Hall is an existing opportunity.

Melksham House will become a SEND school. There is a lot of experience on the council working with schools and young children and the challenges are understood. The school will be a real benefit to parents and children.

Christie Miller site will be used as a Highways Depot. This will save considerable sums that can be reinvested in services.

WC now has a number of affordable housing options in Melksham and hope to obtain more.

A number of properties have been developed for young people in care. It is important to provide support up to the age of 25. Many young people lack support once they reached 18.

Briefly touched on WC budget and in conclusion Wiltshire is in a good place.

Councillor Sankey, Melksham East

Unable to be present but the Town Mayor Councillor Price read out a statement on his behalf.

Sad to announce the end of his involvement with Melksham. Now lives in Calne and must focus on the area where he lives. Has been a councillor in the area of over 20 years, serving on Melksham Town Council, Melksham Without Parish Council and Wiltshire Council. It has been a privilege to work with the town and parish councils.

There is much work outstanding in Melksham East. A community hall, changes to speed limits and weight limits on the roads and ensuring planning section 106 obligations are adhered to. Any future development must deliver the best possible infrastructure and community benefit. I have no doubt that whoever is elected in May they will continue this important work.

Thank you for all the support I have received and good luck to all seeking election in May.

Best wishes.

The Town Mayor Councillor Price thanked all town and Wiltshire councils for their reports.

6/25 Policing in Melksham

The police representative was unable to attend.

7/25 Open Forum/Questions from Electors

Resident 1 – What is the situation with the path from Melksham Oak to Eastern Way?

Answer- Full answer could not be given at the time. Councillor Hubbard commented that costs of installation had increased since funding was supplied by the developers. He was talking to other councillors. The Town Mayor Councillor price advised that people should contact their Wiltshire Councillor if they wanted updates on this issue.

Resident 2 – Representing Group 5 charity. Have been refused a grant by Melksham Town Council this year on the grounds that it is for running costs which are not covered by the grants policy.

Answer – The Annual Town Meeting is probably not the appropriate forum to discuss this but the Town Mayor would be happy to speak at some other time. Councillor Hubbard

pointed out that Melksham Town Council receive many requests and the grants budget cannot fund all of them. The Town Council appreciates the work done by Group 5 and he has offered to meet with the group for future applications to see how they can apply within the Grants Policy.

Resident 3 – Representing Age UK Wiltshire. Wanted to make people aware of the Melksham Community Support Service. Leaflets are available.

Resident 4 – Is it possible to have names and photographs of officers on the website.

Answer –New website coming. Headshots will be included. A resident jokily commented about them needing to be constantly updated.

Resident 5 – Representing Melksham Carnival. Thanks to councillors and officers for all the help given.

8/25 Grant Recipients

Various grant recipients spoke briefly on how grants had helped and been used.

- Avon Bowls Club. Repairs were needed to the greens. Council grant provided 50% of the amount due.
- 4 Youth. Thanks on behalf of all trustees. Worked with between 400-500 young people in past year. Council also supported the Canberra Community Park when the original funding for the pathway fell through.
- St Michaels Church. Grant towards renovation of property in Canon Square. Building work underway. Over 200k raised from congregation and various grants.
- Melksham Food Bank. Monthly full English breakfast. Some times the only hot meal clients get. 3 course Christmas lunch.
- Melksham Music Festival. Non-profit organisation. Grant for Assembly Hall fees is vital for Melksham Monster Ball.
- Melksham Gardeners Society. Grant for Assembly Hall hire. Thanks for coming to event and being part of judging.
- Melksham & District Historical Association. Emergency situation with storage. Thanks for grant and offers of help. Please consider a museum when planning for the Blue Pool.
- HELP Counselling Services. Small charity based in Trowbridge. Grant and assistance from Canberra Centre have allowed them to offer counselling sessions in Melksham
- Wessex MS Therapy Centre. Membership of over 350 about 5% from Melksham. 47 Centres around the country that rely solely on donations.
- Read Easy North and West Wiltshire. Formed 10 years ago. Grant will help towards their aims.

- Melksham Food & River Festival. 10th anniversary this year. Please come along and make it bigger and better.
- Community Larder. Now in 3rd year. Aim to reduce food waste. Thanks to those who help with food pick-ups. Service is for anyone.

The Town Mayor Councillor Price thanked everyone who had received a grant for the work they do.

Refreshments were served and a video of grant recipients was shown.

Signed Dated 16th March 2026