



Finance

Addendum Agenda for 19/10/26 @ 19:00

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Melksham
TOWN COUNCIL



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Tuesday 13 October 2026

Dear Councillors A Griffin, P Aves, E Calland, R Cleary, J Crossley, S Rabey and A Westbrook .

**Ref: Finance Committee Meeting,
Monday 19 October 2026**

Please find attached an addendum agenda for the Finance Committee meeting.

Yours sincerely,

Miss Hayley Bell
CEO



Addendum Agenda

1. **Replacement PA System for Assembly Hall**

For decision on replacing the Assembly Hall PA system

2. **Confidential Session**

For decision.

The following item includes sensitive commercial information. Members are requested to make the following resolution in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

In view of the sensitive nature of the business to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the public and press be excluded, and they are instructed to withdraw.

3. **Transactions Involving an Independent Business**

For discussion and decision if required.

Replacement PA system for Melksham Assembly Hall

Purpose and recommendation

Approval is sought to replace the Assembly Hall's existing public address and live sound system with the proposed Option 1 package, at an indicative equipment cost of £14,910 excluding VAT. Installation and associated costs must be confirmed separately before the final project commitment is made.

The current PA is at breaking point and could fail at any time. Continuing to depend on it exposes the venue to disruption during performances, emergency expenditure and damage to audience and promoter confidence. Replacement should be treated as a priority for business continuity, as well as an investment in the quality and commercial potential of the Assembly Hall.

Current position and urgency

The operational assessment is that the existing system can no longer be relied upon to support the developing events programme consistently. Although the precise timing of a failure cannot be predicted, waiting until equipment stops working would leave the venue responding under pressure, potentially immediately before or during a booked event.

Sound is fundamental to the service the Assembly Hall provides. A performance may become unworkable if the audience cannot hear the singer, dialogue or presenter clearly. Even a partial failure, affecting one side of the hall or a performer's monitor, can materially undermine the event and may be difficult to resolve while the audience is present.

The consequences extend beyond the cost of repairing a component. Failures could require urgent equipment hire and technical support, delay or interrupt a show, lead to complaints or requests for refunds, and reduce bar trading if an event is curtailed. It could also discourage artists, promoters and private hirers from returning.

At the date of writing, additional PA equipment has had to be hired at the Council's expense for each of the last two shows because of failures in the existing system. This expenditure was not budgeted. Until the replacement system is operational, each forthcoming show may require further hire costs of up to £400 for additional equipment. The issue is therefore no longer only a future risk: it is already creating recurring operational costs and makes replacement urgent.

How the proposed system upgrades the venue

The proposed system is not a like-for-like replacement. It is a substantial upgrade from the Assembly Hall's current arrangement, which was designed principally for cinema use and was therefore already unsuitable as the main sound system for a varied live-events venue. Cinema sound is intended to reproduce pre-mixed material in a fixed configuration; live music, theatre, comedy, presentations and community events require adaptable inputs, independent performer monitoring, controlled low-frequency reinforcement and consistent speech and music coverage throughout the room. The proposed package brings these functions together as a purpose-designed live sound system, improving reliability, sound quality, operational flexibility and the venue's ability to accommodate a broader program.

Purpose-designed main tops for live performance and speech

Two three-way main tops would provide the main left and right coverage at the stage. Unlike the existing cinema-oriented arrangement, these are designed to handle the dynamics and detail of live sources, with dedicated frequency sections supporting clearer reproduction of vocals, dialogue, guitars, keyboards and recorded material. This would improve intelligibility and musical definition while providing suitable headroom for performance peaks, without requiring the system to be operated continuously at excessive levels.

Consistent audience coverage across the 24 metre hall

Two rear-fill tops would provide supplementary coverage towards the rear of the hall. The current system's cinema-based configuration does not provide the adaptable, even coverage required for the venue's range of live events. Relying only on sound projected from the stage can leave the rear audience with reduced clarity while people near the front experience unnecessarily high levels. Dedicated rear-fill tops would give the rear audience a clearer local source, producing a more consistent experience throughout the room.

The rear-fill tops would be electronically delayed so that their output arrives in alignment with sound from the main stage system. Their position, angle, level and delay would be established during professional installation and commissioning. This controlled approach would replace the compromises of the current arrangement with coverage tailored to the hall, improving speech intelligibility, musical balance and audience comfort in all principal listening areas.

Controlled bass suitable for a modern events program

Two dual 18-inch subs would provide the controlled low-frequency capacity required for live bands, recorded music, parties and occasional club nights. This is a significant improvement on a system principally configured for cinema playback, as the subwoofers can be properly integrated and adjusted for different event formats rather than relying on a fixed reproduction setup. Commissioned positioning, level and crossover settings would allow powerful but balanced bass, improving impact for music-led events while retaining appropriate control for the room and neighboring program uses.

A professional working environment for performers

Two stage monitors would provide independent monitor positions or mixes. Performer monitoring is a core requirement of live sound but is not adequately addressed by a system designed mainly for cinema use. The upgrade would allow singers, musicians and presenters to hear the sources relevant to them, supporting more confident performances, clearer timing and better control of the front-of-house mix. It would also reduce routine dependence on hired monitor wedges, while productions with larger or specialised requirements could still supplement the house provision by prior agreement.

Flexible digital control and modern stage connections

The digital mixing console would provide flexible control of audience sound, four stage-monitor mixes, the rear-fill tops and event-specific processing from the venue's control position. Two digital stage boxes would provide a combined 32 microphone inputs and 16 outputs at stage level. Compared with the fixed and limited nature of the current cinema-oriented system, this would allow the Hall to configure sound efficiently for bands, theatre, comedy, conferences, civic events and private functions, while reducing reliance on long individual analogue cable runs. The console can also store and recall clearly labelled presets for common booking types, with standard levels, routing and processing prepared in advance. Following suitable training, this would make straightforward community-led bookings significantly easier and more consistent for a non-technician to operate than the current equipment, while allowing the approved house setup to be restored quickly if controls are changed. More complex productions would continue to require an appropriately competent technician.

Equipment budget – Option 1

The following schedule includes the proposed equipment and an allowance for installation labour and cabling.

Equipment	Qty	Approx. each ex VAT	Total ex VAT	Purpose
Subs	2	£2,148.33	£4,296.67	Dual 18-inch subwoofers
Main tops	2	£1,444.17	£2,888.33	Three-way main tops at the stage
Rear-fill tops	2	£622.50	£1,245.00	Time-aligned rear-fill tops covering the rear audience
Digital mixing console	1	£1,840.00	£1,840.00	Digital mixing desk
Digital stage boxes	2	£1,128.33	£2,256.67	Stage inputs and outputs
Stage monitors	2	£446.67	£893.33	Two independent stage monitors
Equipment subtotal			£13,420.00	Excluding VAT
Installation labour and cabling	Allowance	—	£1,490.00	Installation labour and required cabling
Total proposed budget			£14,910.00	Excluding VAT

The proposed budget of £14,910 excluding VAT comprises £13,420 for equipment and £1,490 for installation labour and cabling.

Mounting hardware, any structural assessment, electrical alterations and any additional microphones, DI boxes, stands or protective cases must be identified and priced separately where required, following a review of existing equipment that can be retained. No separate contingency is included in the total above.

The main tops weigh approximately 45kg each, so approved mounting arrangements and suitable fixing points must be confirmed before purchase. Correct positioning and commissioning are essential to achieving consistent audience coverage throughout the hall.

Commercial and community benefits

Reliable, intelligible sound supports the whole programme: live music, comedy, theatre, presentations, community activity and private functions. Audiences should be able to follow a performance throughout the room, rather than experiencing a markedly poorer result towards the back. Clearer speech is particularly valuable for people who find listening in a busy or reverberant hall difficult, although this purchase is not a substitute for any required assistive listening provision.

A dependable house system would give artists and promoters greater confidence in the venue's technical offer. It would also provide a stronger starting point for discussions with touring productions and support the ambition to attract higher-profile returning acts. It cannot guarantee acceptance of every technical rider; show-specific requirements must still be checked in advance, however as an upgrade from the current system it puts Melksham Assembly Hall in a significantly better position and as a much improved offer to touring companies and hirers.

For private hires, parties and weddings, good sound contributes to the overall impression of a modern, professionally operated venue. For the Council, maintaining event continuity protects opportunities for ticket income, hire income and bar trading. These benefits support the commercial case for replacement without assuming that the equipment alone will generate additional bookings.

Ownership of a dependable and appropriately specified house system should reduce the need to hire supplementary PA solely because of failures in the existing equipment. Avoiding potential charges of up to £400 per forthcoming shows. This equipment does make the overall package of the venue stronger to the point that promoters who previously may not have considered the venue because of the poor PA system now could find the venue a viable option.

Delivery and operational controls

Installation should be scheduled around the events programme. Handover should include testing of main and supplementary coverage, integration of the dual 18-inch subwoofers, the independent monitor positions or mixes, and all stage connections. Staff should receive training on the digital mixing console, documented operating instructions and stored settings for common event formats, with a clear process for restoring the standard configuration.

Until replacement is operational, the existing system should be checked before each event and emergency hire arrangements maintained where necessary to protect booked shows. These interim hires may cost up to £400 per event and should be recorded so the Council can monitor the unbudgeted cost of delay. Any equipment assessed as unsafe must be taken out of use. Following installation, routine checks and appropriate maintenance should form part of the venue's operating arrangements.

Decision requested

1. Recognise replacement of the current PA as an urgent operational and financial priority because failures have already required additional equipment hire for the last two shows, with further unbudgeted costs of up to £400 potentially arising for each forthcoming show until replacement.
2. Approve the proposed Option 1 package in principle, including stage monitors, with an indicative equipment budget of £14,910 excluding VAT, subject to procurement and technical confirmation.
3. Approve officer discretion to purchase a similar system for within the same budget should there be any stock/delivery or pricing issues in between the writing of the report and purchase, including any offers on more premium equipment should they become available.

4. Use the current Ear Marked Reserves 'Equipment Replacement' fund, which after current planned spend in other areas has a remaining budget of £15,250.

Replacing the PA before further failures occur would address an immediate operational weakness, avoid recurring emergency hire costs and provide a more suitable foundation for the Assembly Hall's growing programme. The proposed system offers a balanced combination of audience coverage, performer support and flexible control at a clearly identified equipment cost. Given that the last two shows have already required additional PA hire and forthcoming events may each incur costs of up to £400, proceeding promptly represents both an urgent operational response and a long-term saving for the Council.

PA System Alternative Quotes

Option 2

<u>Equipment</u>	<u>Qty</u>	<u>Each ex VAT*</u>	<u>Total ex VAT</u>	<u>Purpose</u>
Main tops	<u>2</u>	<u>£925.83</u>	<u>£1,851.67</u>	<u>Main left and right tops</u>
Subs	<u>2</u>	<u>£1,564.17</u>	<u>£3,128.33</u>	<u>Bass reinforcement</u>
Rear-fill tops	<u>2</u>	<u>£774.17</u>	<u>£1,548.33</u>	<u>Time-aligned rear-fill tops</u>
Stage monitors	<u>2</u>	<u>£774.17</u>	<u>£1,548.33</u>	<u>Two independent stage monitors</u>
Digital mixing console	<u>1</u>	<u>£1,831.67</u>	<u>£1,831.67</u>	<u>Digital mixing desk</u>
Digital stage boxes	<u>2</u>	<u>£1,125.00</u>	<u>£2,250.00</u>	<u>Stage inputs and outputs</u>
<u>Equipment total</u>			<u>£12,158.33</u>	
Labour and cabling allowance	<u>1</u>	<u>£1,500.00</u>	<u>£1,500.00</u>	<u>Installation allowance</u>
<u>Total budget</u>			<u>£13,658.33</u>	<u>Excluding VAT</u>

The Option 2 package provides the same broad functions as the proposed Option 1 system, including main tops, bass reinforcement, rear audience coverage and stage monitoring. However, I would regard it as the less suitable choice for the Assembly Hall's ambition to develop its live music program.

Option 1 is the more established choice in professional live sound, offering greater familiarity and confidence among visiting engineers. Option 2 produces credible equipment, but it does not carry the same professional recognition. This matters when the venue is seeking to attract returning artists and touring productions, although acceptance will always depend on the individual production's requirements.

The proposed Option 2 package also represents a reduction in the main speaker specification. Its two-way main tops lack the dedicated midrange drivers provided by the Option 1 three-way main tops, while its single 21-inch subwoofers offer a different bass configuration from the Option 1 dual 18-inch units. These differences support a preference for the Option 1 package for demanding live music, although the precise performance gap would need to be established through demonstration and system design.

At the current indicative budgets, the Option 2 saves only approximately £1,250. That is a relatively modest saving across a long-term investment. The Option 1 proposal therefore offers the stronger balance of capability, professional confidence and value, rather than accepting a lower specification for a small reduction in initial cost.

Option 3

Equipment	Qty	Each ex VAT	Total ex VAT	Purpose
Main tops	2	£4,500.00	£9,000.00	Main left and right tops
Subs	2	£6,000.00	£12,000.00	Cardioid bass reinforcement
Rear-fill tops	2	£1,250.00	£2,500.00	Time-aligned rear-fill tops
Stage monitors	2	£1,750.00	£3,500.00	Stage monitors
System amplifiers and processing	2	£7,000.00	£14,000.00	Amplification and speaker processing
Digital mixing console	1	£1,831.67	£1,831.67	Digital mixing desk
Digital stage boxes	2	£1,125.00	£2,250.00	Stage inputs and outputs
Equipment allowance			£45,081.67	
Mounting, amplifier rack, cabling, installation and commissioning allowance	1	£4,000.00	£4,000.00	Subject to site survey
Total provisional project budget			£49,081.67	Excluding VAT

Option 3 sits among the premier standards in professional sound reinforcement. A properly designed Option 3 installation would provide excellent sound quality, controlled coverage and integrated amplification and processing, alongside strong recognition among touring engineers.

The concern is therefore its cost relative to the Assembly Hall's requirements. Based on the provisional allowances, the Option 3 package would cost approximately £34,000 more than the proposed Option 1 system. This additional expenditure would not translate into a proportionate increase in useful sound output or audience benefit. Much of the premium purchases more sophisticated system integration, directivity control, support and professional acceptance.

For the Assembly Hall's mix of live music, comedy, private functions and occasional club nights, the proposed Option 1 system is the more proportionate investment, subject to confirmation of coverage and commissioning. There is currently no demonstrated operational requirement that justifies spending more than three times the Option 1 budget on the Option 3 package.

The recommendation is therefore to proceed with the Option 1 proposal: the Option 2 offers insufficient savings to justify the compromise, while the Option 3 provides premium benefits at a cost that is difficult to justify for the venue's present needs.