

MINUTES of the Finance Committee Meeting of Melksham Without Parish Council held to consider grant applications on Monday 28th May 2012 at 7.00p.m. at Crown Chambers, Melksham.

Present: Cllr Mike Mills (Chairman); Cllrs Alan Baines, Rolf Brindle, John Glover and Pat Nicol.

Apologies: Cllr Richard Wood

44/12 **Declarations of Interest:** The Chairman, Cllr Mike Mills declared an interest in Bowerhill Village Hall Trust as a Trustee, in the Bowerhill Residents Action Group (BRAG) as the Chair, in Bowerhill Youth Group as a helper, in Melksham Gardeners' Society as a member, and in the Chair's Allowance. Cllr Alan Baines declared an interest in the Melksham Christmas Lights Group as a volunteer. Cllr Rolf Brindle declared an interest in the BRAG as a member and the Melksham Gardeners' Society as a member. Cllr John Glover declared an interest in BRAG as a member, in the Melksham Railway Development Group as a member and in the Melksham & District Girl Guides as his wife was involved at a County level. The Financial Officer, Mrs Teresa Strange declared an interest in Melksham & District Guides as her daughter was a Rainbow, in Party in the Park as her husband was a volunteer, in Melksham Country Dancers as her children participated in the recent annual event, in Melksham Gardeners' Society as Secretary and in the Financial Regulations that related to her role.

Cllr Glover queried if officers were required to declare an interest. The Clerk advised that it was good practice to do so.

45/12 **Grant Applications:**

1. Bowerhill Village Hall Trust: As the Chairman had declared an interest, Cllr Baines took the Chair for this item. It was noted that £ 2,580 had been reserved in this year's budget for this grant.

Recommended: The Council award a grant of £2,580.

2. Shaw Hill Playing Field and Village Hall: It was noted that £3,300 had been reserved in this year's budget for this grant.

Recommended: The Council award a grant of £3,150.

3. Whitley Reading Rooms:

Recommended: The Council award a grant of £750.

4. The Rachel Fowler Centre:

Recommended: The Council award a grant of £300.

5. Berryfield & Semington Road Action Group (BASRAG): It was noted that the grant request was for the continued production of the newsletter, but that there was no mention of the newsletter in the Accounts submitted for the previous year; which showed a total expenditure for Oct 2010 to Sept 2011 of £26.44. It was noted that the other community newspaper groups had requested a significantly smaller amount, but with a significantly wider circulation. More details were needed as to what the grant would be used for.

Recommended: The Council hold £100 in reserve to be awarded subject to the supply and review of further information requested.

- 6. Bowerhill Residents Action Group (BRAG):** As the Chairman had declared an interest, Cllr Baines took the Chair for this item.

Recommended: The Council award a grant of £400.

- 7. Atworth Youth Group:**

Recommended: The Council award a grant of £150.

- 8. Bowerhill Youth Group:** As the Chairman had declared an interest, Cllr Baines took the Chair for this item.

Recommended: The Council award a grant of £400.

- 9. Melksham & District Guides:**

Recommended: The Council award a grant of £250.

- 10. Carers Support, West Wilts:**

Recommended: The Council award a grant of £300.

- 11. Group Five:**

Recommended: The Council award a grant of £300.

- 12. Happy Circle Day Care Centre:**

Recommended: The Council award a grant of £150.

- 13. Melksham PHAB Club:**

Recommended: The Council award a grant of £250.

- 14. Relate Mid Wiltshire:** It was noted that the application detailed that it had supported residents of the Melksham Area during the last financial year, but was not specific about residents of Melksham Without.

Recommended: The Council hold £100 in reserve to be awarded if Relate can prove that it benefits residents of Melksham Without.

- 15. West Wiltshire Citizens Advice:**

Recommended: The Council award a grant of £200.

- 16. Wiltshire Bobby Van:**

Recommended: The Council award a grant of £100.

- 17. Wiltshire St John Ambulance:**

Recommended: The Council award a grant of £100.

- 18. Melksham Christmas Lights:**

Recommended: The Council award a grant of £350.

- 19. Melksham Party in the Park:**

Recommended: The Council award a grant of £400.

20. Bowerhill Villager:

Recommended: The Council award a grant of £250.

21. Shaw & Whitley Connect:

Recommended: The Council award a grant of £250.

22. PCC of Shaw & Whitley: It was noted that the application was for the maintenance of the churchyard.

Recommended: The Council award a grant of £250.

23. Whitley Methodist Church: It was noted that the application was for improved access and toilet facilities for community events.

Recommended: The Council award a grant of £250.

24. Melksham Railway Development Group:

Recommended: The Council award a grant of £150.

25. AFC Melksham:

Recommended: The Council award a grant of £250.

26. Melksham Country Dancers:

Recommended: The Council award a grant of £100.

27. Melksham Gardeners' Society:

Recommended: The Council award a grant of £250.

28. Golden Fleece Cricket Club:

Recommended: The Council award a grant of £200.

29. Whitley Players: It was noted that no Accounts had been submitted with the application, despite Council staff chasing for the information.

Recommended: The Council reserve a grant of £250 to be awarded further to the review of the accounts that must be received by Thursday 14th June ready for the next Full Council Meeting on 18th June.

30. Melksham Tourist Information Centre: It was noted that £500 had been reserved in this year's budget for this grant.

Recommended: The Council award a grant of £500.

TOTAL GENERAL GRANTS ALLOCATED £6,350
TOTAL GENERAL GRANTS RESERVED £ 450
£6,850

46/12 **Subscriptions:**

Recommended: The Council formally approve payment of the following annual subscriptions:

WALC (Wiltshire Association of Local Councils)	£792.35 + VAT	Paid 21/5/12
SLCC (Society of Local Council Clerks)	£230	
Open Spaces Society	£40	Paid 21/5/12
Wilts & Berks Canal Trust	£30	
CPRE	£29	Paid 21/5/12

Community First	£40	
Local Council Review	£48	Paid 16/4/12
NALC Direct Information Service (DIS)	£100 + VAT	
Clerks & Councils Direct	£12	Paid 21/5/12

47/12 **Chairman's Allowance:** As the Chairman had declared an interest, Cllr Baines took the Chair for this item. The Councillors and staff present took the opportunity to thank the Chair and express their appreciation for his continued, valuable work as Chairman.

***Recommended:** The Council pay £550 for 2012/13 as reserved in the Council budget this year. It was agreed that the Allowance would be paid in three amounts: £200 in June, £200 in December and the residue in March 2012.*

48/12 **Allotment Account:** The Financial Officer reported that the projected figures for 2012/13 for the Allotment Account would be in a deficit. This was due to the following reasons:

a. Briansfield allotment rent for 2012/13: Rents for Briansfield Allotments for the year commencing 1st October 2011 to 30th September 2012 were requested when the allotments were let at the Allotment opening on 6th September 2011. This means that the rent was paid and banked in the year ending 31st March 2012 in advance for 2012/13 (when they would usually be requested in April mid way through the allotment year). Therefore no rents will be received for the Briansfield Allotments in the financial year 2012/13 (apart from re-lets) as it has already been received. The rent for Berryfield allotments for the same period were not requested until April 2012 and therefore will appear in the accounts for 2012/13.

***Recommended:** The Council noted that the Briansfield allotment rents for 2012/13 have already been received and recorded as such in the 2011/12 Year end accounts.*

b. Allotment rent increase: It was noted that the current rental income for both the Briansfield and Berryfield allotment sites would not be sufficient to cover the projected expenditure for 2012/13. The tenants of both sites were now able to park in a designated car park, rather than on the roadside, and the recent improvements made were considered relevant to increasing the rent charged for the allotment plots.

***Recommended:** The Council increase the rent for the allotments, with effect from 1st October 2012; from £12.50 to £17.50 for a half plot and from £25 to £35 for a full plot. A rent of £8.75 would be due for the 4 x ¼ plots at Briansfield.*

c. Transfer from Allotment Reserve to Allotment Account: It was noted that there was £2,000 in the New Allotment Project Reserve as at 31/3/12. A sign with the Council contact details were planned for both the allotment gates at an estimated cost of £200 each, giving a total of £400. The Council had also discussed at the last Budget setting that a noticeboard for each Allotment site was a possibility in the future, estimated at £900 each, giving a total of £1,800.

Recommended: The Council transfer £500 from the New Allotment Project Reserve to the Allotment account to cover the balance as at 31/3/12 of £556.56.

- d. Projected figures for Allotment Account 2012/13: The Financial Officer to amend the projected figures for the Allotment Account based on the above recommendations, for the next Full Council Meeting.

49/12 **Whitley Footway – CATG recommendations to the Area Board:** Cllr Baines reported that the cost of doing the remaining two phases of Footpath improvements at Top Lane, exceeds the whole CATG budget for the year by over £2,000; as the prices had increased since last year. The CATG was informed of another county wide fund of £250,000 that was a Substantive fund for bigger projects that was managed by Portfolio holder Dick Tonge.

The CATG proposed to recommend to the Area Board that the work in Top Lane be completed with CATG funding £7,500; Melksham Without Parish Council funding £1,500 and the remainder of the funding to come from the Substantive Fund. However, Wiltshire Councillor Jon Hubbard would only support CATG funding for £5,000 and Wiltshire Councillor Mark Griffiths would not support the £7,500 funding; this was despite there being no other projects, current or planned, requesting funding from the CATG.

Recommendation: The Council write to Cllr Griffiths requesting his assurance that he would support the Whitley Footpath improvements CATG proposal to the Area Board (6th June), on the basis that Cllr Griffiths is the Wiltshire Councillor for Whitley.

50/12 **Bowerhill Sports Field completion and future budget:** The Chair reported that he and the Clerk had had a successful meeting with Wiltshire Council that morning and confirmed the following points:

- a) Meeting with Wiltshire Council 28th May 2012:
- i) Wiltshire Council will transfer the Bowerhill Sports Field to Melksham Without Parish Council for £1 by Friday 1st June 2012.
 - ii) The English Landscapes contract with Wiltshire Council expires on 31st October 2012.
 - iii) Wiltshire Council will continue to pay English Landscapes and maintain the field until 31st November 2012.
 - iv) Wiltshire Council will arrange a public ceremony for the signing in mid June; to be arranged by Wiltshire Council communications team.
 - v) Wiltshire Council will pay £11,000 to Melksham Without Parish Council by the end of June 2012 at the latest to cover the cost of one year's maintenance.
 - vi) Wiltshire Council will own, insure and maintain the Pavilion including all costs such as rates, water and electricity. There is a clause about not replacing the Pavilion if it burnt down, and the Parish Council Solicitor is requesting an Insurance indemnity against this risk.

- vii) All income from the rent paid by the football clubs (Melksham United and AFC Melksham) will be paid to the Parish Council. However, it was still to be confirmed if this was for the full year or part year; Wiltshire Council to advise.
- viii) Wiltshire Council want to build the Link Road quickly and are planning on obtaining a loan to pay for the link road, and apply for planning permission by September 2012.
- ix) It was previously agreed that a 22metre width would be left for the Link Road, with a 2 metre margin. However, Wiltshire Council wanted more flexibility over the margin. This could impact on the run -off needed from the edge of the football pitch. It was agreed that an independent highway engineer or land surveyor be agreed between both parties at this stage, that could adjudicate on any additional land needed for the Link Road. The terminology within the contract was “fluid boundary”; it had been agreed that if the Solicitors were unhappy with this then this could be extended to “up to 24 metres”.
- x) Steve Ibbetson of Wiltshire Council would advise on the costs to Wiltshire Council of evicting and cleaning up the Sports Field after the Travellers had camped there. Steve had advised that the last lot of travelers that moved into Chippenham had been removed within 24 hours.
- xi) Wiltshire Council had given permission for the Parish Council to ask a local Bowerhill company to move a couple of the large boulders in Westinghouse Way to the gap in the boundary near Knorr Bremse. This was to prevent any Travellers breaching the field over the long bank holiday weekend. The stone would be moved by the morning of Friday 1st June at the latest.
- xii) It was clarified with Wiltshire Council that the field would be designated a QEII Field in Trust but that ownership remained with the Parish Council and not Fields in Trust.
- xiii) A notional start date for work on the new Pavilion was discussed by Wiltshire Council. Officers informed that it was likely to be two year before the present Pavilion was demolished and replaced with a new Pavilion; the new Pavilion could be in place by 2014/15.

***Recommendation:** That the Council propose Mark Lovell Design Engineers, based in Devizes, to adjudicate on any Link Road additional land requirements, as he was familiar with the project.*

b) Future Budget for the Sports Field: The Committee reviewed the Future Budget for the Sports Field prepared by the Financial Officer. The Committee were happy with the content of the budget, with an increase of £2,500 being added from the Precept in each year for the Sports Field, up to and including 2014/15 where a break even point was projected. The Committee requested that the budget be amended to show a continuation of the £2,500 increase for 2015/16 to build up a contingency for replacing capital items and in case of any drainage issues on the field. To be prepared for the next Full Council meeting.

c) Future Budget for the Pavilion: The Committee requested a similar Future Budget for the Pavilion.

- d) **Rates implication for the Pavilion and Sports Field:** The Financial Officer reported that as the Council already claimed Small Business Relief on its premises at Crown Chambers - rateable value £4,450; (currently 100%) it would be unable to claim as well on the Sports Field and Pavilion. The regulations state that “the relief is only available to ratepayers who occupy either a) one property, or b) one main property and other additional properties providing those additional properties each have a rateable value which does not exceed £2,599.”

The values given for the Sports Field and Pavilion were as follows

Bowerhill Sports Field (3.24 hectares)	£ 972
Bowerhill Pavilion 162.60sq m	£2,488
Bowerhill Pavilion Veranda 35.1 sq m	£ 263

The total value was £3,723 and rateable value was assessed at £3,700

However, there were options available as the regulations allow for up to 80% relief where the property is occupied by a Charity or Community Amateur Sports Club; with the Local Authority having discretion to give further relief on the remaining bill. Local Authorities also have discretion to give relief to non-profit making organizations.

Recommendation: *The Council investigate ways in which they can gain 100% relief from paying rates on the Sports Field and Pavilion.*

- e) **Rates implications for Bowerhill Village Hall:** It was noted that Bowerhill Village Hall Statement of Accounts show expenditure for Rates.
Recommendation: *The Council write to Bowerhill Village Hall and advise them of the current Rate regulations to see if they can claim relief based on the details above.*

- f) **Sports Field Working Party:** It was agreed that the next Sports Field Working Party would be on Monday 11th June, following the Planning Committee.

- g) **Legal Fees:** The Clerk reported that Solicitor Michael Williams had advised that his legal fees from 1st June 2011 were £5,500 but as a gesture of goodwill he would reduce it by between 25% - 30% with a maximum cost of £4,100. The Financial Officer confirmed that this amount would be covered by the amount in the Budget (£2,000) and in Reserves (£4,000) for Legal Fees.

51/12 **Annual Review of Financial Risk Assessment and Financial Regulations:**

- a) **Financial Risk Assessment:** The annual review of this document took place. The Financial Officer reported that the following changes had been made to the Financial Risk Assessment:

All pages: Amend insurance amounts in accordance with the Insurance Renewal with Aviva from 1st June 2012.

Page 3 (Computer): Amend “off site” to “stored in fire proof box”

Page 3 (Website): Amend “through recommended SLCC Supplier” to “through local supplier” and “accessed only by Clerk and Assistant” to “accessed only by Clerk, Financial Officer and Assistant”.

Page 3: (Telephone System): Add “NB: New Telephone System – Jan 2012”

Page 3: External Insurance Cover: Added “Enhanced Core Cover now includes: Increased Cost of Working – providing cover should the Parish Council incur additional expenditure as the result of an insured event (e.g. Having to rent office space following a claim at the Council owned premises)”.

Page 5: External Insurance Cover: Added “Enhanced Core Cover now includes: Motor Policy No Claims Bonus & Loss of Policy Excess – should the Clerk or Councillor be using their use private car and involved in an accident whilst undertaking Parish business”

Page 6: Death or injury to Caretaker: Amend “to be checked at least annually by nominated Councillor” to “PAT tested annually”.

Page 7: External Insurance Cover: Amend “Councillors Group Legal Protection” to “NB: Councillors Group Legal protection cover no longer supplied by Aviva as cover was to defend claims made against Councillors for alleged failure to comply with the Code of Conduct under Part III of the Local Government Act 2000. Following the abolition of the Standards Board for England on 31st March this cover is no longer required”

The Finance Committee added the following:

Page 6: Death or injury to Caretaker: Add “All Council mechanical tools and equipment to be checked by ROSPA qualified Caretaker”

Recommended: The Financial Risk Assessment be amended with the above changes and adopted for 2012/13.

b) Financial Regulations:

- i. **Amended Financial Regulations:** The document was reviewed and amended to reflect that Teresa Strange is now the Responsible Financial Officer; rather than the Clerk.

Recommended: The Financial Regulations be amended with the above changes and adopted for 2012/13.

- ii. **Banking and cheque procedures (5.1) and Investment Policy (8.2):** This section of the Financial Regulations was reviewed, with no amendments (other than to reflect the above change relating to RFO).

- iii. **Fees and Charges (9.3):**

- a) **Photocopying charges:** It was noted that the charges to the Council for photocopying had increased from 9.47p per copy to 9.94p per copy (excluding the first 7,140 copies per quarter, already included in the agreement).

Recommendation: *The Photocopying charges to the public be increased from 10p to 12p for 1-19 copies and from 8p to 10p for 20+ copies.*

b) Charge for supply of Annual Accounts:

Recommendation: *The charge for supplying a copy of the Annual Accounts to a member of the public increase from £1.50 to £2 + postage.*

52/12 **Review of Internal Audit:** The Finance Committee reviewed the effectiveness of the Internal Audit, including the Internal Audit tests carried out by Diana Lindsey, the Internal Auditor last year. These tests follow the procedures laid down in the guidelines set out in the Local Council's Governance and Accountability Guidance. It was noted that Diana Lindsey had carried out the Audit very satisfactorily in previous years and had affected a competent and efficient review of the Council's finance and internal controls. It was noted that the Internal Audit inspection for the year ending 31st March 2012 was booked for 11th June.

53/12 **Receipt of Precept Funds:** The Financial Officer reported that the 1st of 2 installments of the Precept £53,500 (50% of the Precept) had been received at the end of April.

Meeting closed 9.40 p.m.

Chairman, 18th June 2012