

MINUTES of the Finance Committee Meeting of Melksham Without Parish Council held to consider grant applications on Monday 3rd June 2013 at 8.00p.m. at Crown Chambers, Melksham.

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

(Cllr Chivers attended the meeting as an observer).

Apologies: Cllr Pat Nicol

44/13

Declarations of Interest: The Chairman, Cllr Richard Wood declared an interest in Group Five as run by a friend and in the Chairman's Allowance. Cllr Mike Mills declared an interest in Bowerhill Village Hall Trust as a Trustee, in the Bowerhill Residents Action Group (BRAG) as the Chair and in Melksham Gardeners' Society as a member. Cllr Rolf Brindle declared an interest in Bowerhill Village Hall, the BRAG as a member, the Melksham Gardeners' Society as a member and in the Melksham Railway Development Group. Cllr John Glover declared an interest in the Melksham & District Girl Guides as his wife was involved at a County level and in the Melksham Rugby Club as his son and grandson were members. The Finance Officer, Mrs Teresa Strange declared an interest in Melksham & District Guides as a member of their Fundraising Committee and daughter was a Brownie, 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 as a school representative for the Extended Services.

45/13

Grant Applications:

1. **Bowerhill Village Hall Trust:** 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 £3,150 had been reserved in this year's budget for this grant.

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

The Finance Officer explained that the Council had reserved £7,000 in this year's budget for general grants including any grant for the Tourist Information Centre and Wilts & Berks Canal Trust which in previous years had their own budget amount reserved. The Chairman reported that the Council had received grant applications totaling requests of £12,740; £8,550 from organisations who had received grants from the Parish Council last year and £4,190 from new organisations. The Committee reviewed the grant applications from those organisations that had been awarded a grant in 2012/13 first; this took the tally of grants recommended to £5,450 with £1,550 of the original £7,000 budget to allocate to the new requests.

Cllr Glover expressed concerns that in these times of austerity and Wiltshire Council cutbacks that by granting funds to new organisations at this point would lead to them applying for funding from the Parish Council in the future. This was a concern as when the houses in the East of Melksham housing development were re-allocated to be within the Town boundary and not the Parish, where would the

income come from in future years to continue grant funding if the current Precept levels were to be maintained.

Cllr Baines explained that although some of the grant requests were from organisations that were new to the Parish Council, some of them had in fact been granted funds in recent years, just not last year. For example: Bowerhill Scouts, Victim Support, Cloth Road Arts Week, St Barnabas Church and the Choral Society.

The Clerk advised that each grant should be assessed on its individual merit as the request for grant applications were advertised as such.

Cllr Glover proposed that £1,550 should not be allocated to grants but should remain in the Council's accounts. This proposal fell as there was no seconder.

The Committee noted that the Section 137 Expenditure limit for 2013/14 is £6.98 per elector.

3. **Whitley Reading Rooms:**
Recommended: The Council award a grant of £500.
4. **The Rachel Fowler Centre:** It was noted that the Chairman was the Parish Council representative for the Rachel Fowler Centre.
Recommended: The Council award a grant of £300.
5. **Forest Community Centre:**
Recommended: The Council refuse this application on the grounds that it is extremely unlikely that the Community Centre will be used by residents of the Parish.
6. **Bowerhill Residents Action Group (BRAG):**
Recommended: The Council award a grant of £400.
7. **Atworth Youth Group:** It was noted that children from Shaw & Whitley attended Atworth Youth Group. Cllr Baines explained that the Council were not currently in a position to operate a youth group in Shaw & Whitley, and that it would cost a great deal more money than the grant request, to fund one of their own.
Recommended: The Council award a grant of £200.
8. **Melksham & District Guide Association:**
Recommended: The Council award a grant of £250.
9. **Shaw & Whitley Toddler Group:**
Recommended: The Council award a grant of £150.
10. **Bowerhill Scout Group:**
Recommended: The Council award a grant of £250
11. **Carers Support, West Wilts:**
Recommended: The Council award a grant of £150.

12. **Group Five:**
Recommended: The Council award a grant of £300.
13. **Melksham PHAB Club:**
Recommended: The Council award a grant of £250.
14. **Relate Mid Wiltshire:**
Recommended: The Council award a grant of £100.
15. **West Wiltshire Citizens Advice:**
Recommended: The Council award a grant of £200.
16. **Victim Support:**
Recommended: The Council award a grant of £150.
17. **Wiltshire Bobby Van:**
Recommended: The Council award a grant of £100.
18. **Extended Services (Melksham Area):**
Recommended: The Council refuse this application on the grounds that the organisation received donations in the year ending Dec 2012 to the same value as the Parish Council's precept; none of which had been spent in that financial year.
19. **Melksham Foodbank:**
Recommended: The Council award a grant of £200.
20. **Wiltshire Mind:**
Recommended: The Council award a grant of £100.
21. **Melksham Music Festival:**
Recommended: The Council award a grant of £50.
22. **Melksham Party in the Park:**
Recommended: The Council award a grant of £250.
23. **Bowerhill Villager:**
Recommended: The Council award a grant of £250.
24. **Shaw & Whitley Connect:**
Recommended: The Council award a grant of £250.
25. **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.
26. **St Barnabas Church:** It was noted that the application was for upkeep of the church schoolroom which is used as a village hall facility by the local community. *Recommended: The Council award a grant of £200.*

27. **Melksham Railway Development Group:**
Recommended: The Council award a grant of £200.
28. **AFC Melksham for Youth Disabled Football Team:**
Recommended: The Council award a grant of £250
29. **Cloth Road Arts Week:**
Recommended: The Council award a grant of £50.
30. **Melksham Choral Society:**
Recommended: The Council award a grant of £100.
31. **Melksham Country Dancers:**
Recommended: The Council award a grant of £100.
32. **Melksham Gardeners' Society:**
Recommended: The Council award a grant of £250.
33. **Golden Fleece Cricket Club:**
Recommended: The Council award a grant of £250.
34. **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.
35. **Melksham Rugby Football Club:** It was noted that no accounts had been provided as this was the Rugby Club's first year of being independent of Melksham House.
Recommended: The Council award a grant of £200.
36. **Tourist Information Centre:**
Recommended: The Council award a grant of £500.
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|---------------------------------------|---------------------|
| TOTAL GENERAL GRANTS ALLOCATED | £6,750 |
| TOTAL GENERAL GRANTS RESERVED | <u>£ 250</u> |
| | £7,000 |

46/13 **Subscriptions:** It was noted that £1,400 had been allocated in the 2013/14 budget for subscriptions.
Recommended: The Council formally approve payment of the following annual subscriptions:

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| WALC (Wiltshire Association of Local Councils) | £833.18 + VAT |
| Society Local Council Clerks | £190 <i>Estimate</i> |
| Wilt & Berks Canal Trust | £30 <i>Estimate</i> |
| C.P.R.E. | £35 <i>Estimate</i> |
| Community First | £36 <i>Estimate</i> |
| Local Council Review | £50 |
| Clerks & Councils Direct | £12 |
| Fields in Trust | £30 |
| Open Spaces Society | £40 <i>Estimate</i> |

The Financial Officer advised that Council usually subscribe to the Open Spaces Society and had been offered one year's free complimentary membership with effect from 1st October 12 as it had entered the first Open Spaces Award in 2012.

Cllr Glover requested clarification as to whether the SLCC subscription had a tax implication for the Clerk as a taxable benefit. The Financial Officer advised that the office staff, and not just the Clerk, used the membership status for accessing online information and discounts for training courses and that the Clerk solely used the membership for this Parish Council. Clarification to be sought by the Finance Officer.

47/13 **Chairman's Allowance:** As the Chairman had declared an interest, Vice Chair John Glover took the Chair for this item and the Cllr Wood left the room.
Recommended: *The Council pay £550 for 2013/14 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 2014.*

48/13 **Financial Risk Assessment and Financial Regulations – Annual Review:-**
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 2013.

Page 1: Increase in Fidelity Cover to £150,000. Increase to Hirer's Indemnity to £5,000,000.

Page 3: Add "some additional and replacement 2nd hand furniture from County Hall" and "New Cover for Loss of Revenue to £10,000".
Remove "External annual check of telephone"

Page 6: Gates & Fences: add "now including Bowerhill Sportsfield perimeter fence" and "3 sets of goal posts at Bowerhill Sportsfield" £14,851.
Mowers & Machinery: add "new petrol strimmer but disposed of trailer"
TOTAL ALL RISK COVER £22,069.51
Change "WWDC" to "Wiltshire Council"

Page 7: Fidelity Guarantee: "Increased cover £150,000"

Recommended: *The Financial Risk Assessment be amended with the above changes and adopted for 2013/14.*

b) Financial Regulations: The annual review of this document took place. The Financial Officer advised that the tender threshold figure on the Financial Regulations was £5,000 and on Standing Orders was £10,000. She recommended that the Council amend the tender threshold value on the Financial Regulations to £10,000. It was noted that the advertisements in the local press, as set out under the Council's tender regulations, were relatively quite costly. (Last tender advert in the Wiltshire Times was £129 + VAT).

Recommended: *The Financial Regulations be amended with the following changes to reflect the change in tender threshold to £10,000 and be adopted for 2013/14:*

11.1 (b) Where it is intended to enter into a contract exceeding **£10,000** in value for the supply of goods or materials or for the execution of works or specialist services other than such goods, materials, works or specialist services as are excepted as set out in paragraph (a) the Clerk in liaison with the RFO shall invite tenders from at least three firms to be taken from the appropriate approved list.

11.1 (f) If less than three tenders are received for contracts above **£10,000** or if all the tenders are identical the Council may make such arrangements as it thinks fit for procuring the goods or materials or executing the works.

11.1 (g) When it is to enter into a contract less than **£10,000** in value for the supply of goods or materials or for the execution of works or specialist services other than such goods, materials, works or specialist services as are excepted as set out in paragraph (a) the Clerk in liaison with the RFO shall obtain 3 quotations (priced descriptions of the proposed supply); where the value is below (£2,000) and above (£100) the Clerk in liaison with the RFO shall strive to obtain 3 estimates. Otherwise, Regulation 10 (3) above shall apply.

(i) **Banking and cheque procedures (5.1) and Investment Policy (8.2):** This section of the Financial Regulations was reviewed, with no amendments.

(ii) **Fees and Charges (9.3):**

a) Photocopying charges: It was noted that the charges to the Council for photocopying had increased from 0.994p per copy to 1.044p per copy (excluding the first 7,140 copies per quarter, already included in the agreement).

Recommendation: *The Photocopying charges to the public remain at 12p for 1-19 copies and 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 remains at £2 + postage.*

49/13

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.

Cllr. Glover queried if the actual expenditure against the budget was regularly reported (as per question 16 Internal Audit Test). The Financial Officer explained that this was not an easy thing to do as they maintained a manual bookkeeping system but a close eye was kept on expenditure items to ensure they were within the budget for the year. The actual expenditure against budget was reported at the half way point through the year at budget review and when items were purchased it was clarified which budget heading it was from and the current balance.

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 2013 was booked for 6th June.

- 50/13 **Local Audit and Accountability Bill:** The Committee noted that on 9th May the Local Audit and Accountability Bill was introduced to Parliament. The Financial Officer drew the Committee's attention to the fact that local bodies would be in charge of procuring their own auditors, as companies and charities already do, in the future, giving greater control over how much is paid for audit services. It was noted that the Audit Commission have appointed Grant Thornton as the Council's external auditor for 5 years from 2012/13. The Bill also extends the power of local taxpayers to veto excessive council tax increases. Local Councils will have to publish spending information over £500 online.
- 51/13 **Dispensation for Precept setting:** The Committee noted that the current Dispensation giving Councillors living in the Parish the ability to discuss and set the Precept expired at the end of the Council term. A new Dispensation needs to be granted for the new Council and will be an agenda item at the next Full Council meeting, 17th June.
- 52/13 **Contribution to CATG for Whitley Footways Middle Lane:** Cllr Baines explained that 3 sections of Whitley Footways had now been completed (with the Council contributing £2,500 to date) in Top Lane. There were now only 2 sections left to do in Middle Lane. This had initially been in the budget for 2012/13 at £2,370 contribution however, at the Special Council meeting on 7th January which reviewed the budget again in light of the cuts needed to manage the lower Precept this had been removed from the budget. It was felt that the scheme would not be considered by CATG due to the difficulties being encountered with the Phase 2 works in Top Lane. £1,800 of this funding was instead vired against the planned hardstanding at Whitley West Hill which had initially been planned for 2013/14.
- At the recent CATG meeting Cllr Baines was surprised to discover that no other schemes had been put forward for consideration by other Councils in the Melksham Community Area (other than £120,000 for a crossing in the Town which has been discounted). Mark Stansby had therefore been requested to obtain up to date pricing for the 2 sections at Middle Lane to be completed.
- It was noted that the Parish Council would need to make a financial contribution to the CATG scheme to ensure it went ahead. More information about the scheme would be available at the next CATG meeting.
- The Financial Officer advised that there was only £500 in the General Highway & Footpath / Lighting Reserve but £8,775 was available in the Community Projects/Match Funding Reserve.
- 53/13 **Contribution to PIGS scheme for Footway 23/24:** The Clerk advised that this project was unlikely to go ahead as the landowner, in liaison with Paul Millard the Rights of Way Officer, was seeking to divert this route.
- 54/13 **Safety rail for Hardstanding at West Hill:** The Clerk advised that a safety rail was needed for the rear of the hardstanding at West Hill to prevent people stepping off the back into the ditch. The Caretaker had taken a look and had advised that the Council ask Wiltshire Council to install a barrier to ensure it was in accordance with safety requirements. Cllr. Baines emphasized that the hardstanding was installed in accordance with Wiltshire Council's specified design and no handrail had been specified.

Cllr. Chivers informed that a local resident, H&S officer for Avon Tires for 20 years, had expressed concerns about the proximity of the ditch to the hardstanding. It was noted that the ditch had recently been dug out and cleared of the undergrowth in and around it.

55/13

Street furniture:

(i) Replacement noticeboard for Sandridge Hill: It was noted that the existing noticeboard at Sandridge Hill was so deteriorated that it was very difficult to read the notices. A quotation had been approved for the purchase of a new noticeboard at the last Finance Committee 12th November Min. 300/12 but at the time only the noticeboard for Beanacre had been ordered whilst plans for the Forest & Sandridge School were reviewed.

Recommendation: *The Council order 1 new replacement noticeboard for Sandridge Hill from Arien Signs at the cost of £658.00 (£578 + £80 delivery) plus VAT from the £1,000 Street Furniture budget heading.*

(ii) New noticeboard for East of Melksham: It was noted that the cost of the powder coated posts for the noticeboard cost £169 per pair and so ideally a location should be sought for a new noticeboard that could be affixed to a wall. It was noted that savings could be made on delivery costs if both noticeboards were delivered at the same time.

Recommendation: *The Council order 1 new replacement wall mounted noticeboard for East of Melksham from Arien Signs at the cost of £409 + £80 delivery plus VAT from the £1,000 Street Furniture budget heading.*

(iii) Noticeboard for Shaw Hill: It was noted that Cllr Chivers had recently made a request for a new noticeboard for Shaw Hill which was on a list for consideration for the Budget for 2014/15.

Recommendation: *The noticeboard currently sited outside Forest & Sandridge Primary School be moved to Shaw Hill when the school site is vacated.*

(iv) Bin for the Spa: Cllr Brindle explained that he had requested a new bin for the Spa under the 2013/14 Budget under Street Furniture. The Clerk confirmed that this had been requested of Wiltshire Council and would chase it up.

56/13

Office and Council needs

(i) WALC Councillor's pack on memory stick: **Recommended:** *The Council purchase 1 memory stick at £8 + VAT.*

(ii) Replacement Crown Chambers equipment: The Finance Officer advised that the 5 year warranty on the photocopier was due to expire in September 2013. However, Condor were happy to continue with their current arrangement of quarterly charge of £74.47 to include 7,140 copies, toners, and maintenance call outs plus charges for copies over 7,140. The only change would be that replacement parts would now be charged for.

It was noted that the Assistant Parish Officer's computer was no longer working, caused by a faulty motherboard. A quotation was noted from Avon-IT for a replacement Zoostorm Desktop Tower PC £150, Delivery within 5 working days £10 and Set up, installation and transfer of data from existing PC £45 giving a Total

of £205 excluding VAT. The existing screen, keyboard and mouse would be used. The existing Windows XP licence would be transferred to the new machine.

Recommendation: *The Clerk with the Chair and Vice-Chair be given delegated powers to purchase the following replacement office equipment for Crown Chambers from the Crown Chambers Reserve £5,000:*

- i) *Replacement Colour printer/scanner - Up to maximum of £120*
- ii) *Replacement shredder - Up to maximum of £200*
- iii) *Replacement telephone extension (Reception desk) - Up to maximum of £25*
- iv) *Replacement computer for Assistant Parish Officer - Up to maximum of £205*

(iii) New safe for Crown Chambers: It was noted that the Council's legal documents were stored at various local legal firms depending on the origin of the paperwork. The Clerk explained that one local solicitor had insisted that they did not have some Council legal papers and the Clerk had persisted and eventually tracked them down at their Trowbridge branch. The Clerk and Finance Officer therefore recommended the purchase of a safe for Crown Chambers so that legal documents could be stored securely and safe from fire damage.

Recommendation: *The Clerk has permission and delegated powers to purchase a new safe for storing legal documents for Crown Chamber, up to a maximum of £100, from the Crown Chambers Reserve £5,000.*

Meeting closed 9.43 p.m.

Chairman, 17th June 2013