

MINUTES Of a Special Meeting of Melksham Without Parish Council held on Monday 3rd March at 7.00 p.m. at Crown Chambers, 7 Market Place, Melksham at 7. 00 p.m.

This Meeting was held to confirm the appointment of the new Clerk and to consider a proposal from Melksham Town Council to amalgamate Melksham Town Council with Melksham Without Parish Council

Present: Cllr. Richard Wood (Chairman); Cllrs. Alan Baines; Rolf Brindle; Paul Carter; Terry Chivers; John Glover; Mike Mills; Adam Nardell; Pat Nicol and Steve Petty.

Apologies: Cllrs. Gregory Coombes; Trudy Fennell and Mike Sankey

Cllr. Mills left this Meeting at 7.20 p.m. to attend another pre-arranged meeting.

- 524/13 **Declarations of Interest:** Ms Teresa Strange declared an interest in the item relating to appointment of the new Clerk and left the Meeting when this matter was discussed.
- 525/13 **Appointment of new Clerk - report re interviews:** The Chair gave details of the three candidates that had been interviewed and reported that the Interview Panel had unanimously agreed to recommend Ms Teresa Strange as the new Clerk.
Resolved: *The Chair proposed, seconded by Cllr. Mills that Teresa Strange be appointed as the new Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer for Melksham without Parish Council with effect from 1st April 2014. This motion was unanimously accepted.*
- 526/13 **New Clerk – salary:** Cllr Baines; a member of the Interview Panel explained how salaries for clerks were set in accordance with the NJC recommended salary scales using the SLCC Conditions of Service for Clerks. Melksham Without Parish Council came into the LC2 category due to its precept level and the number of electors. He reported that the Interview Panel was recommending Scale 34 pro rata for 25 hours per week, as a starting salary, inclusive of two increments for Teresa’s Working with Your Council and Certificate in Local Government Administration qualifications. There was discussion about the flexibility of the LC2 range and how increments were obtained.
Resolved: *Cllr. Baines proposed, seconded by Cllr Glover that Teresa Strange be paid at Scale 34 (£28,922 per annum full time equivalent) pro rata for 25 hours per week £19,542 per annum £15. 03 per hr as Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer. This was agreed with two abstentions, one being Cllr Petty.*
- 527/13 **Future Staffing Requirements:** A report prepared by the outgoing Clerk and Teresa Strange as Finance Officer was considered. Teresa Strange explained the requirements for future staffing and her wish to appoint a new Finance Assistant for a minimum of 10 hours per week initially to take on basic financial work but with the potential to take on the more complex work as Finance Officer such as the Budget, End of Year Accounts and Audit. Cllr. Glover expressed concern that currently 69 hours per week were worked in the Council office and with the Clerk’s 25 hours, plus Margaret hours (6 per week) and Jo’s hours (18 per week) there was still a shortfall of 10 hours per week. It was noted that these hours excluded any work for the joint Neighbourhood Plan. Teresa reported that there would be capacity for her to work a few hours extra per week when required and Jo too could do a few extra hours.
Resolved 1. *Cllr Steve Petty proposed, seconded by Cllr. Alan Baines that the Council advertise to appoint a Finance Assistant for 10 – 15 hours per week and*

make clear there may be a possibility to take up additional hours for other duties in the future. This was agreed. 2. The Finance Assistant post be advertised on the Council website and in the Melksham Independent News and two sister papers in Frome and Westbury. 3. The Council hold a Staffing Committee Meeting as soon as possible to agree the details.

528/13 **Procedure for Confidential Minutes – Change to Standing Orders:**

(As this was a proposed change to Standing Orders it stood adjourned without discussion until the next ordinary Council Meeting in accordance with SO 75)

Cllr Glover proposed the following procedure to deal with Confidential Minutes form part of future Council Standing Orders. This motion was seconded by Cllr Baines:

- a) A Confidential Minute will be marked “confidential”, produced on pink paper and circulated with to Members with Minutes in advance. It will be signed with the public Minute of the same number.
- b) The Council Master Minute Book only will include the letter C next to the open Minute: e.g. Min. 491/14C. (NB The public minutes accessible in the office are copies)
- c) The Confidential Minute along with the public version of the same Minute will be retained in a separate folder marked Confidential Minutes in the Clerk’s office, out of reach of the public
- d) A list be kept of Confidential Minutes at the front of the CM book, to show the date, subject and Minute number.

It was noted that this motion would be discussed at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 14th April.

529/13 **Planning Application:** The Council considered the following planning application:

W14 00726/FUL Melksham Campus : Cooper Avon Tyres Sports & Social Club, Melksham House 27 Market Place Melksham SN12 6ES. Demolition of modern extensions to Melksham House, removal of existing swimming pool, internal alterations and extensions to Melksham House to provide a new community campus including leisure facilities (2 swimming pools, sports hall, fitness suite, activity studio, indoor bowls, climbing wall) public services (library, multi purpose rooms, offices, cafe) health facility and associated car parking and landscaping.

It was noted that this was a Town parish application. Comments were required by 14th March 2014.

Resolved: *The following comments be submitted:-*

- a) *Melksham Without Parish Council welcomes and supports the new Campus in principle.*
- b) *The Parish Council questions the need for the proposed wall in front of the main old building as it looks incongruous and serves no clear purpose. It is unclear what height it will be. The Council questions the need to use a wall to focus on the new build, as it should be an attractive enough building in its own right to fittingly enhance the old house.*
- c) *The proposed arrangements for bus and coach access appear to be inadequate. There is not a large enough drop off area for buses to have enough space to turn round. This means that there still needs to be provision*

made for loading and unloading of buses and coaches in the Market Place. Some buses have to return to schools to pick up a second load so they would not necessarily wish to park up. However they would need somewhere to stop for around ten minutes while pupils get back on the bus.

- d) It is unclear whether Footpath 20 across the site will be retained. Please would you clarify.
- e) There does not appear to be any recommendation in this application to route the town bus via the campus although this was recommended in the original consultation.

530/13 **Planning Correspondence:**

- (i) **W13/06053 Retrospective application for wall and fence.** The Council noted comments received from the occupant of 112B Beanacre. It was also noted that this application had been called in by Cllr. Chivers. Cllr. Baines emphasised that the Rights of Way Officer needed to be consulted as there was a right of way adjacent to the wall.
Resolved: *The Council ensure the Rights of Way Officer had been consulted about this application.*

- (ii) **Appeal for W13 05248 Land south East of Oakley Farm, Lower Woodrow -Retrospective conversion of existing building to dwelling.** It was noted that the Council had objected to this planning application. The Council commented that “The Council OBJECTS this is a change of use as the dwelling would not be associated with agricultural use.
Resolved: *The Council object to the Appeal on the same grounds.*

- (iii) **W13 06140 FUL Sandridge Solar Farm: Email from Cllr. Chivers:** It was noted that the Solar Farm application was going to the Strategic Planning Committee for approval on 12th March and that a 42 page report would be available on line later that week. Cllr.Carter reported he would be attending as a private individual. Cllr Baines reported that the Planning Officer’s report indicated that all the comments of the Parish Council had been taken into account.
Resolved: *The Council let the other interested parishes that this application was being considered by the Strategic Planning Committee on 12th March.*

- (iv) **Sandridge Solar Farm – split of community benefit fund:** The Clerk reported that a map received from the agent indicated that the majority of the funds would go to the Town Council as within the set 2.75km radius, most of the housing was within the town parish. The Clerk agreed to forward the email to Council Members.

531/13 **Amalgamation of Melksham Town/ Melksham Without parishes:** The Meeting noted a letter received from the Town Council to request that talks take place about the possibility of Melksham Town and Melksham Without amalgamating to become one council. Cllr. Chivers reported that he had received emails from residents living just outside the town boundary who did not want any changes to be made. The Chair emphasised that some extension of the town boundary would be inevitable to take in the new build which had taken place. Cllr. Glover emphasised that while there was no strong reason for the development east of Melksham staying in the Melksham Without parish, but the other parts of the parish were separated from the town by clear natural or man-made boundaries. In the future it was planned to have an East of Melksham Bypass that would separate Bowerhill from the town. Berryfield was separated from the town by Western

Way. There were green fields between Shaw and Whitley and Beanacre. Cllr. Baines reported that the last Boundary Review in 1991 had quite correctly put Foresters Park and Savernake Avenue into the town and a similar action was now required to put development adjacent to the town boundary. For this the logical boundary to the north would be the East of Melksham Distributor Road in the same way that the southern boundary was Western Way.

The Council then considered if there was any good case in favour of amalgamation Cllr. Baines felt the issue rested on whether there was effective Local Government at the moment. At present there was no dissent or move among residents to change. The town had approximately 11,405 residents and one councillor represented about 760 electors in an urban area. The parish, on the other had had 6,400 electors over a huge spread-out rural area, represented by 13 councillors, at a ratio of 500 people to one councillor. If one single Council were to be formed to represent the combined electorate of about 18,000 would be about the size of a small District Council but with fewer members. At the most there would only about 15-17 members would be permitted. This meant for both areas, the ratio would drop down to one member having to represent over 1,000 people which would not be so effective for either area.

The Chair questioned what would happen to rural Shaw, Whitley and Beanacre in such a set up.

Cllr Chivers felt they would have to join together into one parish. He reported that he had received a paper about the need for a Boundary Review relating to the East of Melksham development but had not heard anything about merging the two councils. It would surely not be included in the planned Review for 2017 as there was not enough time for all the public consultation that would be necessary.

Cllr. Nicol emphasised that moving boundaries did not necessarily solve anything. People went where they felt comfortable.

Cllr. Baines informed that while Wiltshire Council had powers to revise boundaries between parishes, major changes would have to go to the Boundary Commission and normally happened as a result of being part of an overall Review in Wiltshire. At the moment there was no demand and so the Boundary Commission would not be interested.

Cllr Petty questioned the letter received from the Town Council as it began by inviting discussion and concluded by stating that Wiltshire Council would be advised of the Town Council's wish to amalgamate.

Cllr. Nardell emphasised that the Council needed to make clear that the issue of a Boundary Review to adjust the boundary East of Melksham was entirely separate from the suggestion of amalgamation

Resolved: *The Parish Council reply to state: " We note your letter. Melksham Without Parish Council has no desire to explore the amalgamation of the two councils. However as a separate issue, the Parish Council does accept that a boundary adjustment is needed between the two parishes to take in recent development adjacent to the town and will advise Wiltshire Council accordingly"*

532/13 **Neighbourhood Plan Funding – email from Town Clerk:** The Council noted an email from the Town Clerk to inform that in view of the rider that the Parish Council would only accept a 5: 4 split of costs for one year and then wished to reconsider the matter, he was deferring the next Joint Neighbourhood Plan Meeting scheduled for 10th March in order to take the matter back to the Town Council Meeting on 31st March. The Chair expressed concern about the amount of time already lost.

Resolved: *The Council reply to make clear the Parish Council was keen to start the Neighbourhood Plan process and could see no reason for further delay.*

- 533/13 **Tree-planting at Bowerhill Sports Field:** The Council noted that 105 trees would be arriving that week for planting on the Bowerhill Sports Field. It was agreed to liaise with Cllr Mills about storage and planting.
- 534/13 **Melksham Market:** The Council noted a letter from Wiltshire Council to inform that the weekly Market was being re-located from its present position to the Market Place with effect from 1st April 2014 and to invite any concerns or objections by Friday 14th March 2014.
- 535/13 **New Forest and Sandridge School:** Cllr. Chivers reported that the new school was scheduled to open in 2015. The S106 Legal Agreement would shortly be signed. However as the school was having to turn away so many children and places were running out in Melksham, there were now plans to put in a mobile temporarily on the existing school site.

Meeting closed at 8.20 p.m.

Chairman, 24th March 2014