

MINUTES of the Finance Committee of Melksham Without Parish Council held on Monday 7th March at Crown Chambers, Melksham at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Cllrs. John Glover (Committee Chair) Richard Wood, Rolf Brindle, Pat Nicol, Mike Mills, & Alan Baines

Cllr Carter attended as an observer

Officers: Teresa Strange (Clerk) & Sharon Newton (Finance Assistant)

Apologies: There were no apologies

Housekeeping: The Committee Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and explained the evacuation procedures in the event of a fire.

536/15 **Declarations of Interest:** Cllr Brindle declared an interest as a member of BRAG (Bowerhill Residents Action Group), Bowerhill Village Hall and MRDG (Melksham Railway Development Group. Cllr Mills declared an interest as the Chairman of BRAG, a Trustee of Bowerhill Village Hall, and as a member of Melksham Gardeners' Society. Cllr Baines declared an interest as a volunteer for Melksham Christmas Lights. Cllr Glover declared an interest as a member of MRDG, BRAG and in the Guides as his wife was the District Commissioner. Cllr Wood declared an interest as Chairman of BASRAG (Berryfield & Semington Road Action Group) and the Council representative for the Rachel Fowler Centre. The members took no part in the voting on the grants to be awarded for those organisations that they had declared an interest in. The Clerk declared an interest in Melksham & District Guides as a member of their fundraising committee and her daughter was a Guide, as a Trustee of Young Melksham, as a Committee member of Melksham Gardeners' Society and in the BASRAG grant for the Berryfield Village Hall floor repair as her husband, Andy Strange, had quoted to undertake the repair work.

537/15 **Public Participation:** There were no members of the public present.

538/15 **Grant Aid policy:**

- a) The Committee noted the current Grant Aid policy.
- b) The Clerk had drawn to the Committee's notice the Scope of Power under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, from the "Clerk's Manual" namely "119. *If such assistance is now given to a value exceeding £2,000 in any one financial year, the Council must attach a condition to the grant requiring the recipient to provide a written report of how the money has been used. That report must be provided to the council within 12 months of the date of the grant, but it may take the form of an annual report or set of accounts which clearly identify the manner of spending.*"
"122: *Although the statutory requirement to deposit a written report applies only to financial assistance of more than £2,000 a local council should ask recipients of grants (of whatever amounts) to provide them with a statement of how the money has been used*".

It was noted that the only grants of £2,000 and above awarded by the Council are for Village Halls, and under Section 133 and not Section 137

of the Local Government Act 1972 and so “119” does not apply in this case. The Council adheres to the good practice outlined in the guidance requiring applications to produce a statement of their financial affairs (last set of audited accounts) and details of any fund raising activities already undertaken by them, before approving applications, however it was acknowledged that not all organisations request grant funding every year. **Recommendation: i)** *The Grant Application form for 2017/18 to request applicants to make a statement on how the money awarded on the last grant they received from Melksham Without Parish Council had been spent. ii)* *The Clerk check that this addition to the application form would meet the guidance, with the Internal Auditor who was carrying out an Inspection the following day.*

539/15 **Grant Aid 2016/17 Budget provision:**

The members noted the Budget provision for Grant Aid.

Section 137 Grants	£ 7,500
Village Hall grants (Bowerhill & Shaw)	£ 6,250
Other grants not under the above powers	£ 500
Melksham Community Area Partnership	£ 200
TOTAL	£14,450

It was noted that there was also £1,500 in the Budget for Bowerhill Youth Club/Parish Youth Work.

540/15 **Grant Aid awarded 2016/17:** The Committee Chairman reported that the Council had received 38 applications for Grant Aid with requests totalling £24,786. **Recommendation:** *The Council award grants to the following organisations, from the following Budget headings:*

ORGANISATION	Awarding in 2016/17
<i>Bowerhill Village Hall Trust</i>	<i>2,700</i>
<i>Shaw Hill Playing Field and Village Hall</i>	<i>3,500</i>
TOTAL	£6,200
<i>Berryfield Village Hall</i>	<i>500</i>
<i>Whitley Reading Rooms</i>	<i>500</i>
<i>The Rachel Fowler Centre</i>	<i>200</i>
<i>Melksham Riverside Club</i>	<i>200</i>
<i>Bowerhill Residents Action Group (BRAG)</i>	<i>400</i>
<i>Berryfield & Semington Rd Action Group (BASRAG)</i>	<i>400</i>
<i>Community Action Whitley Shaw (CAWS)</i>	<i>300</i>
<i>Melksham & District Girl Guides</i>	<i>150</i>
<i>Bowerhill Scouts</i>	<i>200</i>
<i>Youth Adventure Trust</i>	<i>-</i>
<i>Happy Circle Day Centre</i>	<i>150</i>

Group Five	300
Melksham PHAB Club	-
Melksham Foodbank	100
Melksham Read Easy	100
Wiltshire Mind	100
Wiltshire Sight	100
Melksham & District Seniors 55+	100
Melksham Christmas Lights	250
Melksham Party in the Park	150
Melksham Carnival	150
Melksham Food Festival	150
Melksham Shed	250
Bowerhill Villager	250
Shaw & Whitley Connect	250
Christchurch Shaw & Whitley Parish Church but must be used for the Toilet Fund and not general maintenance of the Church.	150
Melksham Railway Development Group	200
Beanacre & Melksham Cricket Club	200
AFC Melksham (Disabled)	250
Melksham Gardeners' Society	150
Enigma	100
Rhythmic Dance Twirl Association	-
Shaw & Whitley Friendship Club	200
TOTAL	£6,500
Young Melksham	1,000
TOTAL	£1,000
Melksham Area Community Safety Group	250
TOTAL	£250
Melksham Tourist Information Centre	500
TOTAL	£500
	14,450

The Village Hall grants for Bowerhill & Shaw Village Hall were awarded in total £6,200 from the Budget of £6,250 leaving £50 surplus.

The Section 137 grants awarded were £6,500 from the Budget £7,500 leaving £1,000 surplus.

The £1,000 grant awarded to Young Melksham is taken from the Budget amount for Bowerhill Youth Club/Parish Youth Work as this is for the youth work being run from the Canberra Centre, including the shuttle bus. A shuttle bus is doing a circuitous route around the Parish on Thursday evenings to pick up young people from the Parish to enable them to attend the Youth Club and it has previously been agreed that funding this was a good idea as it provided access to a Youth Club for all young people in the Parish, rather than just in

*Bowerhill if a Youth Club had been started at the Pavilion as originally planned.
(Min 451/15 c).*

The £250 grant awarded to the Melksham Community Area Safety Group was awarded from the Budget amount of £200 for Melksham Community Area Partnership and £50 surplus from the Village Halls Budget.

The £500 Melksham Tourist Information Centre grant is awarded against the £500 Other grants Budget, and is under Section 144 of the Local Government Act 1972 which covers Tourism.

Grants were not awarded to the following organisations due to the following reasons:

Melksham PHAB: *No grant awarded as the organisation donates funds to other organisations which is contrary to the Parish Council Grant Policy clause 8 : “Grants may not be awarded to organisations which themselves issue grant aid or distribute funds to help other groups.”*

Youth Adventure Trust: *No grant awarded as the organisation only helps 3 young people in the Parish and have a large amount of unrestricted funds in their account.*

Rhythmic Dance Twirl Association: *No grant awarded as this is a national organisation that is based locally. The local group, Enigma, has been awarded its own grant which supports the residents of the local community engaged in this activity.*

541/15 **Subscriptions 2016/17:** The Committee noted that the total of £515 was higher than the budgeted amount for 2016/17 of £450. This was due mainly to the increase in the SLCC membership fee as this was dependent on the Clerk’s salary banding which now reflected the hours worked rather than the hours contracted.

Recommendation: *The Council formally approve the payment of the following subscriptions (estimated amounts).*

<i>Society of Local Council Clerks</i>	<i>£ 210</i>
<i>ILCM</i>	<i>£ 50</i>
<i>Wilts & Berks Canal Trust</i>	<i>£ 30</i>
<i>CPRE</i>	<i>£ 40</i>
<i>Community First</i>	<i>£ 40</i>
<i>Local Council Review</i>	<i>£ 45</i>
<i>Clerks & Councils Direct</i>	<i>£ 15</i>
<i>Fields in Trust</i>	<i>£ 35</i>
<i>Open Spaces Society</i>	<i>£ 50</i>
TOTAL	£ 515

542/15 **Parish Defibrillator Project:**

- a) The members noted the specification detail and adherence to Financial Regulations and Standing Orders with regards to tender arrangements for the supply of 7no. Defibrillators and ancillary packages.

- b) It was noted that the deadline for receipt of Tenders was 10.00am on Wednesday 16th March 2016. It was agreed that the Finance Committee would meet on Thursday 17th March at 10.00am to open the Tenders, review and make a Recommendation to the Full Council meeting being held on Monday 21st March.
- c) It had been previously agreed that an approved electrical contractor would be sought to enable them to quote for the installation of the defibrillators as well as for call outs to the Pavilion or defibrillators if required.
Contractors had been sought that were happy to quote on this basis and the Officers sought clarification on what their quote was to be for. A day rate would be sought for the installation of the defibrillators and an hourly rate for future call outs for the defibrillators and any electrical issues at the Pavilion. This would also be an agenda item for the Finance Committee on Thursday 17th March, for a Recommendation to be made to the Full Council.
- d) **Project Funding:** The Clerk reminded members that an Area Board grant of £3,312.50 had been received and banked. A Bowerhill resident had been fundraising for a defibrillator for Bowerhill and had so far raised £1,370 which she was donating to the project. The Friends of Melksham Hospital had confirmed some time ago that they would provide funding for two defibrillators although it was unsure if this included enough for the storage units and training, etc. This would be clarified when the actual costs of the project were confirmed following the acceptance of Tenders. The 2015/16 Budget shows an expenditure of £14,500 for this project, which will slip to the 2016/17 financial year.
- e) **Water Meadow Legal Agreement:** Marstons Brewery had showed fantastic support to the community by erecting a new Parish Council noticeboard on their grounds, looking out on to Cranesbill Road. They had also provided the electricity connection for a defibrillator as part of the new build of the new pub in the East of Melksham housing development. A simple legal agreement had been drawn up for the installation of these two items on their property, which was reviewed. The cost of the legal fees for drawing this up had been borne by Marstons Brewery. **Recommendation:** *The Council confirm that they are happy to proceed with the legal agreement and confirm that they do not need to seek their own legal advice.*

543/15 **Internal Controls & Audit arrangements:**

- a) **Internal Audit:** The Clerk advised that the Internal Auditor, Kevin Rose of IAC Ltd, was conducting his Audit visit the next day, 8th March. He would undertake the majority of tests and inspections and then return at a later date when the year end figures had been completed to finish the Audit and complete the External Auditor's paperwork. The members noted the Internal Audit Engagement letter, and the comprehensive list of documents required for the Audit.
- b) **Year End reporting:** The members noted the following guidance from the "Governance and Accountability for Local Councils Practitioners' Guide (March 2014)". *"Current rules require local councils where the gross income or expenditure for the year (whichever is higher) has exceeded the*

threshold of £200,000 for a period of three continuous years, to report their financial details on an Income & Expenditure basis, from the third year onwards". The revised Budget for 2015/16 showed a total income of £222,655.12 and the Precept alone for 2016/17 was set at £221,000.

Advice and guidance would be sought from the Internal Auditor on how to convert a Receipts & Payments account to an Income & Expenditure account and which year to commence reporting this way. It was thought that this year would be the best one to start so that the new Finance Assistant did not have to learn about two different ways of reporting. The difference is that under a Receipts & Payments system the report has to record debtors and creditors.

- c) **Internal Controls:** The members noted a newspaper article about a recent fraud case in Suffolk; a parish clerk had carried out a £16,000 fraud by over ordering stationery items and then selling them on the internet. The Committee discussed the Council's own internal controls in the light of this case. The Clerk advised that they had adopted best practice by having different members of the Finance Committee to sign cheques and inspect the invoices and wage slips, but this meant that they would not spot that excessive stationery had been claimed each month through the Officers' expenses. **Recommendation:** *The Council adopt the following policy for Expenses: i) All Expenses to be purchased by the Pre-paid debit card where possible. ii) The Clerk to sign off the Expenses Claim for all employees before payment. iii) The Chair of Council or the Chair of the Finance Committee to sign off the Clerk's Expenses Claim before payment.*

544/15

Quotations and Future spending for approval: The members considered the following quotations and requests for spending for Recommendation to the Full Council. Cllr Glover confirmed that the Finance Assistant had sought and received confirmation that all the quotations to be reviewed were still valid, as some had past their validity date.

- a) **Parish Weedspraying for 2016/17: Recommendation:** *The Council approve the quotation from **Complete Weed Control** for the supply and apply of chemical weed control to paths, etc, at Shaw, Whitley, Beanacre, Bowerhill and Berryfield in June 2016 at £815 per application excluding VAT.*
- b) **Swing replacement at Beanacre Play Area: Recommendation:** *The Council approve the quotation from **Vitaplay** for the removal of existing broken frames and to supply and install 1 x 2.4m frame & swing, and 1 x 1.8m frame & swing, at the cost of £4,999.99 excluding VAT.*
- c) **New IT Software:** It was noted that the current versions of MS Word, Excel and Outlook were from 2007 and there were some compatibility issues when spreadsheets and documents were received from external sources. 3 sets of new software would be required, one for the Clerk, Parish Officer and Finance Assistant. **Recommendation:** *The Council approve the purchase of 3 copies of Microsoft Office 2016 Version from Avon IT at the cost of £169.98 per copy, total £509.94 excluding VAT.*
- d) **Training Courses for the new Finance Assistant: Recommendation:** *The Council approve the booking of the following SLCC training courses for the new Finance Assistant to attend i) VAT Course at £ 125 + VAT. ii) Finance Course at £125 + VAT*

- e) **Donation to Bradford-on-Avon Community Emergency Volunteer Group:** The members noted the monthly Training Schedule being run in 2016 by the Bradford-on-Avon Community Town Council Emergency Volunteer Group who had extended the invitation to include other local parishes. The Clerk had attended the first session in January with Cllrs Carter and Tait as well as 2 flood wardens from Shaw & Whitley, and Tony Bruun and Brian Roberts from CAWS who were developing the existing flood plan and wardens in Shaw & Whitley to cover all potential Community Emergency situations; their first meeting was being held that night. The Clerk also felt that it was very useful to build relationships with other Emergency Response groups as it gave an opportunity to share experiences and knowledge and could even be called on to assist in an emergency situation. The Group were offering the Training for free, but suggested that a donation be made to their Group in lieu of this. The Clerk had discussed this informally with Renate Malton from Wiltshire Council who advised that to book a training provider such as Serv On costs £300 per session. Serv On were providing the training on Flood response at two of the Bradford-on-Avon sessions. **Recommendation:** *The Council make a donation of £300 to Bradford-on-Avon Town Council Community Emergency Volunteer Group for the Clerk to attend their training sessions during 2016. A further donation would be considered later in the year if the sessions were also attended by Parish Councillors and other Volunteers from the Parish.*
- f) **Approved contractors:** Details needed to be researched from the O&M Manuals for the Pavilion to see what requirements there were for the servicing of the boiler and other equipment. Local plumbing contractors, as well as the installation company, to be contacted to request rates for the servicing work and to be on call if problems arise.

545/15

Forward Planning:

- a) **Contract end dates:** It was noted that the Long Term Agreement for the Insurance cover with Aviva ends 31st May 2017 and the Grasscutting contract with J H Jones ends at the end of March 2017. The Grasscutting quotes would need to be sought at the end of the year to be able to inform the budget setting in January.
- b) **Wiltshire Council play areas in the Parish:** Following the Parish Council's resolution to take over the assets of the 3 Wiltshire Council play areas in the Parish there had been some frustration with the lack of interest shown by Wiltshire Council's Legal team. The Clerk had therefore met with Bill Parks, Head of Service for Highways etc (which covered play areas) for South Wiltshire to see if the Council could proceed with a Delegated Service from 1st April 2016 for the 3 play areas, with the asset transfer at a later date. It was noted that there may not be an eventual asset transfer for the Berryfield Play Area land as this was on the route of the planned Wilts & Berks canal "Melksham Link" project. **Recommendation:** *The Council proceed with obtaining quotes to bring Kestrel Court, Hornchurch Road and Berryfield play areas up to the Parish Council standards and with this information to apply for s106 funding identified from the East of Melksham developments for the two play areas in Bowerhill (Kestrel Court and Hornchurch Road).*

Funding from the Roundponds Solar Farm had been identified for the refurbishment of the Berryfield play area.

- c) **SIDs (Speed Indicator Device):** Following the information and quote that the SIDS batteries were no longer available in the UK and had to be sourced from Germany, Cllr Baines had broken down the requirements into component parts and sourced a UK supplier. The Finance Assistant reported that the batteries were available for £24.69 each. A quotation had been sought including the connectors, leads, chargers etc to enable the Clerk to raise as an issue on the Area Board reporting system as this was the trigger for the request for financial assistance to appear on the next CATG agenda (meeting on 24th March). Cllr Glover asked the Clerk to send the details of the battery supplier to Amesbury Parish Council as they too were taking on a SID.
- d) **Whitley Reading Rooms AGM:** The Clerk advised that she had been working with the three officers and trustees from Whitley Reading Rooms who had all given a year's notice that they were standing down from the Committee and Trust at the AGM on Tuesday 12th April, 2016. Further to another recruitment drive it was hoped that there were now enough volunteers to come forward to allow a new Committee to be appointed but the officers had come to meet with the Clerk and the Parish Council representative for the Reading Rooms, Cllr Terry Chivers, as they had concerns that this was not the case. The AGM would be attended by the Clerk and Cllr T. Chivers as the representatives from the Parish Council in case the Committee was unable to be formed. Guidance had been sought, and the members noted the advice note from Community First. The existing Committee would be asked to stand until an Emergency meeting was set up for a few weeks time where another attempt would be made to form a Committee.

546/15

Banking arrangements:

- a) **Unity Online Bank account:** The Clerk advised that now the new Finance Assistant had started, login details could be added to the Unity Bank application form and be submitted. The aim was to have the new account up and running in time to pay the staff salaries by BACS from this account for the new financial year, commencing 1st April 2016. When the opening of the account was discussed it was agreed to open the account with £75,000 as that was the amount protected under the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (*Min 279/15c*). However, as soon as salaries were paid out from this account, it would be below the £75,000 compensation level, and so it would be prudent to move across enough into this account to cover the payment of salaries to staff for 2016/17 (£36,000) and a sum to cover the Prepaid debit card to be organised with this new account in addition to the originally planned £75,000. **Recommendation:** *The Council open the new Unity Online Bank account with £115,000.*
- b) **New savings bank account:** It was noted that the Council would have more than £75,000 in its Lloyds Bank account, especially with the Precept payments at 6 monthly intervals. **Recommendation:** *The Council investigate opening another bank or building society account, with a different institution than the currently held accounts, so that their*

funds are protected under the Financial Services Compensation Scheme.

- c) **Fixed Term Deposit:** In addition to the monthly fixed term deposits arranged between Full Council meetings, a separate deposit will be made for a longer time period when the Precept is deposited, to maximise revenue but to still give future flexibility whilst arrangements are made for a new savings account, and any other investment options are investigated. **Recommendation:** *The Council make a Fixed Term Deposit with Lloyds Bank for £150,000 for 3 months, following the payment of 50% of the 2016/17 Precept to the Council.*
- d) **Direct Debit arrangement:** E.ON had now acknowledged that the Bowerhill Pavilion had a gas meter installed and an account set up; despite the contract for dual power being signed in May 2015. The bills for both gas and electricity were to be received monthly with surcharges if not paid immediately. **Recommendation:** *The Council set up a monthly direct debit payment to E.ON for the gas and electricity accounts for the Bowerhill Pavilion.*

546/15 **Cloud Storage:** The Clerk advised that the new Microsoft Office 365 Business Essentials package that had been installed was working well and meant that Officers could now access their email system from out of the office in real time, which was synched with the office version. Part of this package was to provide 1Tb of Cloud Storage. The Council's Risk Register (*Page 2: Computer & Software*) needed to be updated to reflect a change of off site storage and back ups to reflect a proposed move to the Cloud Storage. **Recommendation:** *The Council store all of its computer files (working files and archive files) on the Cloud.*

Meeting closed at 9.03 pm

Chairman, 21st March 2016