

MINUTES of the Finance Committee of Melksham Without Parish Council held on Monday 11th January 2016 at Crown Chambers, Melksham at 7.35 p.m.

Present: Cllrs John Glover (Committee Chair); Alan Baines (Committee Vice Chair), Richard Wood, Rolf Brindle and Pat Nicol.

Officers: Teresa Strange (Clerk) and Jo Eccleston (Assistant Parish Officer).
Cllrs. T. Chivers and Paul Carter as observers.

Apologies: Cllr. Mike Mills.

Housekeeping: Cllr. Glover welcomed all to the meeting and explained the evacuation procedures in the event of a fire.

449/15 **Declarations of Interest:** Cllr. Brindle declared an interest in any items relating to BRAG. Officers, Teresa Strange and Jo Eccleston declared an interest in items relating to staffing and salaries.

450/15 **Public Participation:** There was no public participation.

451/15 **Budget Review:** The Committee reviewed the Income and Expenditure for the current financial year, and the proposals for the financial year 2016/17 for the following accounts.

a) Allotment Account:

Income for this year was as expected, with the expenditure higher as the project to install water troughs at both Allotment Sites had slipped into this financial year, having originally been planned for 2014/15. Councillors noted that the installation of the water troughs had equalised the water consumption between the two sites. The Budget reflects a transfer from Reserves to the Allotment Account to cover the cost of the water trough project. With £500 from the New Allotment Reserve and £2,100 from the Community Projects Reserve.

The Allotment Account for 2016/17 shows the Income covering the proposed Expenditure for the year. This includes the proposed rent increase for tenants from 1st October 2016 of £25 for 5 perches (1/2 an "old style" plot) from £20.

Recommendation:

<i>Revised Income for 2015/16</i>	<i>£1,585.50</i>
<i>Revised Expenditure for 2015/16</i>	<i>£4,735.00</i>
<i>Proposed Income for 2016/17</i>	<i>£2,006.25</i>
<i>Proposed Expenditure for 2016/17</i>	<i>£1,890.00</i>

b) Jubilee Sports Field Account:

Income for this year is slightly higher than predicted as the delay to the new Melksham Town Football Club means that the youth teams have hired the pitches for the whole season now. This will make an impact on the Income for 2016/17 with the income from the youth teams shown at 50% of this year's value as the assumption is made that although they are moving to the new facilities there may still be some initial use of the Council's facilities and adhoc use in the future. As the youth teams are planning on moving though, there will be the opportunity to

lay out the pitches in a different format, with scope for more 11 vs 11 adult sized pitches and the Income reflects a second home team using the facilities alongside AFC Melksham in 2016/17; but consequently less adhoc usage from adult teams. Less Income is shown for this year and next for the hire of the lounge and kitchen area with a change of plan for proposals for youth work in the parish, and not opening up a specific Youth Club run from the Pavilion (See General Account). The Income for this year also shows the potential for sponsorship from local businesses for new picnic tables.

The Expenditure for this year is higher than predicted, but with the building of the new Pavilion there were a lot of unknown and therefore estimated costs this year. This continues to be the case for 2016/17 with the running costs of the Pavilion hard to predict as it's only been up and running since September 2015 and so usage is hard to ascertain. It is noted that the costs for the maintenance of the field are relatively fixed as this is part of a 3 year contract.

The Jubilee Sports Field Account shows a deficit of £8,308.72 at the end of this financial year, with the previously agreed £10,000 transfer from the Bowerhill Sports Field Reserve transferred in both this and next year; and this year also £11,000 from the New Pavilion Reserve transferred.

Recommendation:

<i>Revised Income for 2015/16</i>	<i>£ 5,075.00</i>
<i>Revised Expenditure for 2015/16</i>	<i>£25,243.88</i>
<i>Proposed Income for 2016/17</i>	<i>£ 2,800.00</i>
<i>Proposed Expenditure for 2016/17</i>	<i>£15,927.00</i>

c) General Account:

The Income for this financial year is higher than estimated with actual funds received that were not anticipated; this includes an Area Board grant towards the Defibrillator project and Community Benefit funding from the Roundponds Solar Farm. However, any s106 funding from the housing development on the old Forest & Sandridge School site has now moved to 2016/17. The Council also received more VAT refunded than anticipated as the new MUGA (Multi Use Games Area) at Hornchurch Road was completed in 2014/15 and so therefore its VAT reclaim was in 2015/16.

The Income for 2016/17 was reviewed, but any discussions on the Precept for next year were held after the Expenditure and Reserves for the Council next year were reviewed. The Income does show a small element of potential funding coming from the Sandridge Solar Farm as this will be paid 6 months after connection to the grid and installation is currently taking place. However, the amount to follow is very difficult to ascertain as it's based on the percentage of houses within a 2.75km radius of the Solar Farm that are in the Parish; this will change with the 733 houses in the East of Melksham housing development moving across to within the Melksham Town Council boundary which is anticipated to occur at the same time as the next local elections in May 2017. The Income for 2016/17 also shows potential s106 funding from developments currently taking place in the East of the Parish which Wiltshire Council have confirmed can be used for public open space projects in Bowerhill as has been unable to be used in the East of Melksham housing development.

Expenditure for this year is less than expected as funding is now not anticipated being used for a Parish Poll as this was a provision for the Community Governance Review which has now been decided. Money put aside for a Casual Vacancy election, has been agreed would be better suited in the Election Reserve. Costs on the Neighbourhood Plan have been lower than anticipated this year, with the bulk of the cost of the project now being shown for expenditure in 2016/17. A sum had also been put aside for the well in the Market Place, which has been removed from the Budget as revised plans do not show the reinstatement of a well in the Market Place. 100% Small Business Rates Relief has been obtained for this year for Crown Chambers, and the budget expenditure has been reduced to reflect this. The money put aside for Dropped Kerbs in the Parish has been moved to next year following the latest update from the CATG (Community Area Transport Group). The cost of the defibrillator project is now higher as more are being considered than originally planned for (Bowerhill Pavilion added to the scheme) but any outdoor public open space projects for East of Melksham using s106 funding have been removed (and set aside for taking on Wiltshire Council owned and maintained play areas in Bowerhill in 2016/17.) The street furniture budget for this year is also higher than originally planned with more notice boards and a lot of street furniture being installed on concrete plinths.

Expenditure for 2016/17 was reviewed in detail. Usually the cost of consumables is uplifted by the Inflation rate from September as this is used to calculate rises in state benefits. However, this September showed a negative inflation rate and Councillors still anticipate a rise in the cost of consumables so these have been shown with a slight increase.

The Councillors discussed the proposal to fund public toilets in the town, with the withdrawal of services by Wiltshire Council in April 2016. At the moment £3,000 is shown in the Budget which is the difference between the quoted cost of running a set of toilets of £15,000 less the £12,000 that is understood to be put aside by the Town Council. However the Town Council were meeting that evening, 11th January, to make their final Budget arrangements and to set their Precept and this may well change. The Town Council were now aware that the Parish Council were interested in providing some funding towards the public toilets, but there were difficulties as the Parish Council supported saving the Market Place and Bath Road toilets (*See Min. 428/15 December Full Council Meeting*) and the Town Council supported saving Church Street toilets. The Committee discussed putting a sum of £15,000 into the expenditure for 2016/17 for public toilets in Melksham in case the Council wished to fund a set on their own but it was agreed to leave it at £3,000 whilst more information was sought from the Town Council on their proposals and then the Full Council make a decision when they met on 25th January to approve the Budget and Precept.

£2,000 is shown for match funding CATG schemes in 2016/17 as well as the amount from dropped kerbs in the Parish agreed by CATG that will not be implemented until the new financial year £2,400. A small sum £270 is shown for the proposal to take on SIDS (Speed Indicator Device) from Wiltshire Council in a joint venture with Melksham Town Council, Broughton Gifford Parish Council and

Atworth Council, with a meeting to find out more booked for 19th January. The costs have been based on the Amesbury model.

£7,000 is shown for the installation of 2 spare basketball hoops in the parish, with the associated safety surfacing. £3,000 is shown for upgrading the two play areas currently owned and maintained by Wiltshire Council in Bowerhill (Kestrel Court and Hornchurch Road) following the resolution at the December Full Council meeting to take them over as assets from Wiltshire Council (*See Min. 431/15bi*); this is set against s106 funding from the East of Melksham housing developments as the Council have been unable to gain agreement from Greensquare for any additional play equipment to be installed East of Melksham. Flood prevention works in Shaw & Whitley are shown at £2,000 if a grant for the same amount is able to be obtained from SSE (Southern & Scottish Electric) Community Resilience Funding.

£3,000 is set aside for repairing or replacing street furniture in the Parish owned by either the Parish Council or Wiltshire Council as from 1st April 2016 any damaged assets will not be repaired and if unsafe will be removed (as per the situation with the Play Areas). It was noted that two of the Parish Council's own bus shelters are under observation and may well require repair work at some point. £3,000 is shown for the cleaning of bus shelters (the Parish Council own 11) as the increased workload for the Parish Caretaker with taking on additional play areas and their inspection and maintenance schedule will give him less time to spend on these types of activities; and the Council may wish to consider cleaning some or all of the Wiltshire Council bus shelters in the Parish too.

It was noted that the National Joint Council were currently in negotiations with the Unions over a potential pay rise for Council staff on a national basis, with a 1% rise offered which the Unions were considering. Staff salaries reflect a slight raise to accommodate this, and if any adjustments are made following the introduction of the Living Wage at £7.20 per hour which erodes the differential between members of staff.

£2,500 is the increased amount shown for cutting the grass in play areas, as this now needs to include Hornchurch Road, Kestrel Court and Berryfield being taken over from Wiltshire Council. This also increases the amount shown for the annual ROSPA inspections on play areas. £20,000 is shown for the repairs to the swings at Beanacre (£5k) and the potential to refurbish the play area at Berryfield at £15k based on the work carried out in Shaw Play area in 2015. This £20,000 is nominally set against the funding from Roundponds Solar Farm of £28,000 received in this financial year; with £8k assigned for other play areas.

£30,000 was added to the Precept this year for work to improve Shaw Play Area of which £15,000 has been spent on the refurbishment of equipment and the new safety surfacing and spinner (in 2014/15 and 2015/16), with £10k agreed to be spent on tractor style play equipment which is pending more consultation work by CAWS (Community Action: Whitley & Shaw) on where this should be sited in case the consultation leads to the expansion of the current play area. Of the original £30,000 this leaves £5k for match funding for the Shaw Play area for future plans. The remaining £8k from the Roundponds Solar Farm funding can be set against

the play areas for Shaw, Beanacre and Berryfield as the s106 funding from the East of Melksham housing development can be used to fund improvements to the Bowerhill play areas only due to locality. This Councillors summed this up, as the £28,000 from the Roundponds Solar Farm to be spent on improvements to the Play areas at Shaw, Beanacre and Berryfield and the £36,558 from the East of Melksham s106 funds to be spent on improvements to the Play Areas at Bowerhill (Kestrel Court, Hornchurch Road) and other public open space projects in Bowerhill or East of Melksham.

Councillors discussed the potential to take on public open space from Wiltshire Council and including the expenditure for grass cutting etc but this was removed from the Budget.

£1,500 is shown as expenditure for the Bowerhill Pavilion Youth Club this year. However, things have moved on with the re-opening of the purpose built Canberra Youth Centre in the town in November 2015. This has much more room, facilities and paid youth workers in attendance. From the beginning of 2016 Young Melksham will be running a dedicated minibus to collect young people from the surrounding villages in the Melksham Community Area and deliver them to and from the organised youth club nights at the Canberra. It has been informally agreed that this would be a better solution for the young people of Bowerhill than the opening of their own youth club in Bowerhill. The Melksham Community Youth Officer Ceri Evans had expressed concerns that due to the limited size of the Pavilion lounge area that there would not be sufficient room for enough young people to make running a youth club there viable, in addition to the lack of facilities in comparison to the Canberra centre. The £1,500 for the Bowerhill Pavilion Youth club set aside for this year could instead be used for Parish Youth Work and support the provision at the Canberra Youth Centre, with young people from all over the Parish able to access its services by using the minibus provided, rather than just from Bowerhill. A similar amount for youth work has been set aside for 2016/17 too.

With all the projects planned for 2016/17 the expected VAT for the year is expected to run at a cost of approximately £23,147. This would be claimed back in 2017/18.

Recommendation:

<i>Revised Income for 2015/16</i>	<i>£215,994.62</i>
<i>Revised Expenditure for 2015/16</i>	<i>£149,639.75</i>
<i>Proposed Income for 2016/17</i>	<i>£ 52,675.57 excluding Precept</i>
<i>Proposed Expenditure for 2016/17</i>	<i>£209,501.94</i>

d) **Reserves Account:**

The Committee reviewed the Reserves account with the amounts being spent from the Reserves Account and the amounts reserved for major projects and contingency funding for both current and next financial year.

Recommendation:

<i>Revised Reserves for Major Projects 2015/16</i>	<i>£31,000</i>
<i>Revised Spending from Reserves 2015/16</i>	<i>£33,000</i>
<i>Total Reserves 2015/16</i>	<i>£89,475</i>

<i>Proposed Reserves for Major Projects 2016/17</i>	<i>£79,400</i>
<i>Proposed Spending from Reserves 2016/17</i>	<i>£0</i>
<i>Total Reserves 2016/17</i>	<i>£168,875</i>

452/15 **Precept for 2016/17:**

The tax base for 2016/17 has been confirmed by Wiltshire Council at 3205.60. Based on the 2015/16 Average Band D household contribution of £53.32 this would give a Precept of £170,922.59. A Tax Support Grant of £197.57 will also be provided by Wiltshire Council with the Precept but is not included in the Precept request or calculation. It is noted that this is the last year of this grant and none will be provided in 2017/18.

Councillors discussed the aim to be in a good financial position to be able to take on assets and services of Wiltshire Council as and when they are no longer provided, if they benefit the residents of the parish; this approach necessitated building Reserves for future years to be able to repair or replace assets or take on additional responsibilities next year, and the following years.

The Committee looked at the Expenditure planned, the Reserves made and the impact on the carry forward figure at the end of 2016/17. They noted that the Wiltshire Police Authority were currently consulting on increasing the Band D contribution to the Police by “the price of a pint”, a £3.12 increase on the previous year.

Recommendation: *The Precept for 2016/17 be £181,148.46, this is a rise of £14,724.87 (8.8%) from £166,423.59 in 2015/16. However, some of this increase is based on the increased Tax Base figure for 2016/17 with the actual rise for an Average Band D household being 5.983% a rise of £3.19 from £53.32 to £56.51. This is a total contribution from an Average Band D household to the Melksham Without Parish Council precept of £4.70 per month; £1.08 per week. The increase is an additional 6p per month.*

451/15 **Audit Arrangements for 2017/18 & Threshold Limits – NALC Article:** The Committee noted an article by NALC on new audit arrangements for Councils for 2017/18 and threshold limits. Councils would be able to choose their own external auditors in the future, but there were lots of restrictions and requirements to take into account. There would be an option to be part of the central arrangements or to opt out.

The Parish Council’s annual turnover may exceed the £200,000 turnover threshold in this financial year and next, which means that the Council would fall under the requirements of the Government Transparency Code 2015. **Recommended:** *The Clerk investigate the requirements for the Government Transparency Code 2015.*

451/15 **Update on New Bank Account:** The Clerk reported that the new Unity Bank Account for online banking had not yet been set up as this was something that she wanted to be a project for the new Finance Assistant once appointed.

Meeting closed at 10.11pm

Chairman, 25th January, 2016