

**MINUTES of the Full Council of Melksham Without Parish Council held on  
Monday 6 July 2020**

**(DUE TO THE ON-GOING COVID 19 PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS THIS MEETING  
WAS HELD VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM – MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC WERE ABLE  
TO ATTEND AFTER CONTACTING THE CLERK FOR AN INVITATION AND  
PASSWORD AND THE MEETING WAS LIVE STREAMED FOR MEMBERS OF  
THE PUBLIC TO WATCH)**

**Present:** Councillors Richard Wood (Chair), John Glover (Vice Chair), Alan Baines, Paul Carter, Nick Holder, David Pafford, Mary Pile, Robert Shea-Simonds, Paul Taylor, Stuart Wood

**Officers:** Teresa Strange (Clerk), Lorraine McRandle (Parish Officer), Marianne Rossi, Finance & Amenities Officer

**In attendance:** 5 Members of public

**001/20      Welcome, Housekeeping & Announcements**

Councillor R Wood welcomed everyone to the first Full Council meeting since March, following the Government advice to stay home due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. The following announcements were made:

- a) To note the Bowerhill election had been cancelled, as were all local elections, until May 2021.
- b) To note the Annual Parish meeting on 7 April was cancelled. However, the Clerk hoped to still circulate a booklet of reports in due course and sought a steer from Members on whether they wished to hold an Annual Parish meeting before the elections in May.

**Resolved:** To postpone the Annual Parish meeting until March 2021.

- c) To note the Melksham 'Our Community Matters' (the Area Board priority setting event) on 8 April 2020 had been cancelled.

- d) To note the Parish Council website has gone over to the Beta version, which is much more accessible and has gone through an accessibility check. Therefore, the Council had met the new accessibility statutory regulations prior to the September deadline.
- e) It was noted Wiltshire Council were entering into a partnership with TransWilts Community Rail to improve facilities and the car park at Melksham Railway Station. Seed funding had been provided for this project by the parish council, as well as a host of other stakeholders.
- f) To note the draft Melksham Neighbourhood Plan had gone out to consultation in 1<sup>st</sup> June, with the deadline extended until 27 July 2020.

## **002/20 Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillor Coombes due to a family emergency.

**Resolved:** To note and accept the reasons for absence.

Councillor Terry Chivers was not present

## **003/20 Invited Guests**

- a) **Wiltshire Councillor Phil Alford (Melksham Without North) & Wiltshire Councillor Nick Holder (Melksham Without South)**

### **Councillor Alford**

Councillor Alford explained cabinet papers had recently been issued with a recommendation being put forward to return Area Board capital funding to the 2020/21 budget, in order for the Area Boards to support their local communities, which he hoped would be approved.

Councillor Alford explained he had been offered a portfolio for public health – whole life pathway, supporting those transitioning from child to adult social care.

### **Councillor Holder**

Councillor Holder informed the meeting Wiltshire Council had gone from two Chief Executives to one. The leader had put forward various changes, including management structure changes, which would result in significant salaries savings, recognizing the pressure on Council finances.

The Area Board were continuing to meet on a weekly basis to discuss the local response to Covid-19 and whilst not 100% attendance at meetings, there was cross party support in making sure the local community were properly served by its Wiltshire Councillors.

Councillor Holder informed the meeting Councillor Seed had been appointed Chair of the Area Board and Councillor Alford Vice Chair. There had also been changes to outside body membership with Councillor Hubbard as the Community Area Transport representative (CATG) and himself as representative on the Health & Wellbeing group.

The next meeting of the Area Board would be held on 22 July which was primarily to discuss the community response to Covid-19.

The next Full Council meeting of Wiltshire Council would be held on 21 July, remotely, with an Extra Ordinary Full Council meeting on 8 September to solely discuss proposals on boundary changes coming out of the Cabinet meeting earlier that day.

**004/20            a)     To receive Declarations of Interests**

There were no declarations of interests.

**b)     To consider for approval any Dispensation Requests received by the Clerk and not previously considered**

The Clerk reminded Members they were due to discuss Berryfield Village Hall and as there was a financial contribution from the developer towards the costs for the Parish Council to build it, a dispensation had been lodged with Wiltshire Council.

**005/20            To consider holding items in Closed Session due to confidential nature**

*Under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and representatives of the press and broadcast media be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business (Item 17c) as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.*

The Clerk explained 17c and possibly 7f would need to be considered in closed session as they pertained to staffing matters.

**Resolved:** To exclude members of the press and public from the meeting, given the confidential nature of business to be transacted under items 17c and 7f, which related to staffing matters.

006/20

## **Actions as a result of Covid-19**

### **a) To note public office closed since Tuesday 17 March and no public council meetings held in person since Monday 16 March**

Members noted the Council offices had been closed to the public since Tuesday 17 March with no meetings being held in person since Monday 16 March, however, meetings had been held remotely since then. This was further to the Government guidance issued on the evening of 16<sup>th</sup> March.

### **b) To note delegated powers given to Clerk & Officers to act on council's behalf during lockdown**

For clarity, an extract from the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) on delegated powers had been circulated for Members information:

*'Under Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972, the council can arrange for the discharge of any of its functions by an officer of that authority (as well as by a committee or sub committee, or by any other local authority).'*

Members noted the delegated powers which had been given to the Clerk and officers at the Staffing meeting on 16 March 2020 (Min 489/19a); which had been confirmed by members by email the following day.

### **c) To note decisions made under delegated powers since 16 March**

A list of decisions made by the Clerk and officers under delegated powers since 16 March had been drawn-up and circulated for Members information; this included the approval of members sought by email.

The Clerk advised Members the list would be published on the website in due course.

**Resolved:** To note the decisions made by the Clerk and officers since 16 March 2020.

For the Chair to sign the list of decisions made under delegated powers as an accurate record and to attach to the minutes of this meeting.

**d) To note new Government legislation to hold council meetings remotely and latest NALC/SLCC guidance**

Members noted the various Government Legislation to hold council meetings remotely and the latest NALC/SLCC guidance which had been circulated to Members for their information prior to the meeting.

The Clerk explained new powers for Local Councils to hold meetings remotely came into force in April, with local councils having a duty to allow the public to observe council meetings.

Within the documentation it stated, *'following the Government announcement of further easing of lockdown restrictions from 4 July as at 26 June, both NALC and SLCC strongly advise local councils to continue to meet remotely, without the need for face to face contact. The Government rules still state that we should all work from home if we can.'*

Councillor S Wood sought clarification on whether members needed to join the meeting via video or whether attending via telephone would suffice.

The Clerk explained the legislation stated local councils had the power to hold public meetings remotely by using video or telephone conferencing technology until May 2021. Therefore, if a Councillor did not have the capabilities to join the meeting by video, they could access the meeting via audio means instead.

**e) To approve Virtual Meeting policy**

A virtual meeting policy from another council had been circulated to Members for their approval which included several suggested amendments by the Clerk.

The Clerk explained Members needed to consider a policy on how members of the public accessed meetings. Currently those who wished to participate in a meeting contacted the Clerk up to 30 minutes before the start of a meeting, requesting an invite and password. With those wanting to observe a meeting doing so via a YouTube link and asked Members to consider how long the recording should be available on YouTube.

Members expressed a wish to continue holding meetings via the Zoom platform rather than investigating other platforms.

**Resolved:** To approve the Virtual Meeting policy as circulated including the amendments as suggested by the Clerk.

For YouTube recordings of meetings to be made available until the minutes were approved and published.

**f) To consider amending Standing Orders to reflect changes to meeting protocols**

The Clerk asked if Members wished to amend Standing Orders to reflect changes to meeting protocols, given the current health crisis precluding meetings taking place in person or whether Members felt the new legislation allowing for meetings to be held remotely overruled current Standing Orders, with regard to:

- 3i: A person shall raise their hand when requesting to speak.
- 3s: Unless Standing Orders provide otherwise, voting on a question shall be by a show of hands.
- 11e(i): Confidential Note. A confidential note for a related minute will be marked 'confidential', produced on pink paper and circulated to Members at the meeting.

Rather than change the Standing Orders, it was:

**Resolved:** New Government legislation to allow remote meetings overruled current Standing Orders, with Members communicating their wishes to the Chair in an unambiguous manner.

Confidential notes for a related Minute to be circulated to Members along with their agenda packs.

**g) To note purchase of IT hardware for 4no. councillors to allow effective and meaningful participation in remote meetings and agree Budget Heading**

The Clerk explained in order to enable Members to effectively participate in remote meetings, 4 laptops had been purchased under delegated powers, at a cost of £360 each using best value, with a £10 charge for next day delivery and £20 each for the IT consultant to set-up, totalling £1,530 (excluding VAT) and suggested these costs come from the General Contingency Reserve.

**Resolved:** To note 4 laptops had been purchased under delegated powers at a total cost of £1,530, to come from the General Contingency Reserve.

**h) To consider purchase of further IT hardware for officers and other councillors**

The Clerk asked for consideration to be given to purchasing additional laptops for those Members who had expressed a wish for one, and the three officers plus docking stations, or whether they wished to wait until the elections next year or once the outcome of the current Governance Review were known to purchase laptops for councillors.

Some Councillors had expressed a wish for a new laptop, including Councillor Glover, who explained that often demands were placed on the use of his home computer by other members of his household therefore it was not easy to attend some meetings remotely.

The Clerk explained whilst a laptop had been purchased for Councillor Coombes, in order that he could participate in the meeting, he had expressed a concern that due to poor eye sight he was finding it difficult using the laptop. The Clerk suggested he might be better using a webcam with his current computer, which had a larger screen. Therefore, there was a possibility his could be available for someone else to use.

Councillor S Wood, whilst supporting the need for the council to move forward in providing agenda papers by electronic means, felt given the costs involved in providing everyone with an electronic device now in order to access meetings and also provide hard copies of the agenda and papers was not a good use of council funds, especially when new legislation stated Members could attend meetings via telephone.

Councillor S Wood suggested a review of the Council's current IT Policy with a view to providing agendas and agenda packs by electronic means in the future.

Councillor Glover declared an interest in this item.

Several Members raised a concern at the high cost associated with purchasing laptops for officers, given the IT provision currently available within the office, whilst recognising the need for flexibility.

The Clerk explained that it was lucky officers were able to use home computers to undertake council work plus support the Melksham Community Response Team, following the Government

announcement to work from home in March. However, this was not ideal for various reasons and it was unclear how long officers would have to continue to work from home.

Members were reminded that if new laptops/docking stations were provided for staff, it would not mean that most of the current IT equipment would be redundant, as officers used two screens in order to undertake council work when in the office.

Several Councillors supported the need to look at conducting a full review of the Council's IT provision with a view to having access to agendas/papers via electronic means in the future, therefore, it was:

**Resolved:** To purchase laptops and docking stations for the 3 officers and a laptop (if Councillor Coombes does wish to continue using his laptop) for Councillor Glover and purchase a webcam for Councillor Coombes, if necessary.

To form a working group consisting of Councillors Baines, S Wood, Holder, R Wood and Glover to review IT provision/policy, bearing in mind the need to reduce the use of paper. With any recommendations being implemented ready for the new council following the elections in May 2021.

**i) To adopt IT policy and to consider moving forward without hard copy agenda packs**

The Clerk advised there was no IT policy in place regarding the use of electronic devices from home and for the devices just purchased for members and sought a steer from Members.

Given a new IT Policy would be investigated following the previous resolution, it was:

**Resolved:** Members and officers be reminded that any IT equipment is the property of the Council and should be returned at the end of a Member's tenure or when a member of staff leaves employment at the council.

**j) To consider holding Annual Council meeting in July or to hold in abeyance until May 2021**

The Clerk explained that legislation had changed to allow councils to hold Annual Council meetings later than normal, given the current health crisis and asked whether Members wished to hold one. Alternatively, it allowed for the meeting to be held in abeyance until May 2021.



It was felt unless any Member wished to stand down from a position or committee that the current structure remains until May 2021 following local elections in May 2021.

**Unanimously Resolved:** Not to hold an Annual Council meeting in 2020.

**k) To consider council meeting schedule and format over coming months**

The Clerk reminded Members, Planning meetings were due to be held on 20 July and 17 August with a Full Council meeting planned for 14 September. As the Council did not meet in August and it had been agreed not to hold the Annual Council meeting on 27 July, suggested holding a Full Council meeting on this date instead in order to discuss any matters that may come up.

**l) To consider time extension on Clerk & Officers' delegated powers**

The Clerk asked if Members wished to extend her delegated powers, given it was uncertain when current restrictions would be fully lifted, or there was a Wiltshire lockdown or a second wave in case decisions needed to be made quickly without the need for calling a meeting.

**Resolved:** It was agreed to extend the Clerk's delegated powers until the Full Council meeting on 14 September.

Given there were several members of public who wished to speak to various items, it was agreed to move all of item 8 regarding Melksham Community Response further down the agenda in order to allow public participation to take place.

Standing orders were suspended to allow a period of public participation.

**007/20**

**Public Participation**

**Provision of bin by Melksham Rugby Club**

The secretary of Melksham Rugby Club attended the meeting on behalf of the Club and Melksham Football Club to ask if a bin could be installed on the public right of way which ran adjacent to the Rugby pitches in the ecology area, as this route was regularly used by dog walkers, as current bins were often full with dog walkers leaving waste discarded nearby, which club members were often left to clear, which was not ideal as they did not have the relevant licences or equipment to dispose of waste appropriately.

It was noted Wiltshire Council's policy was not to provide additional bins, preferring to have existing, less well used bins relocated. However, town/parish councils could provide new bins, but had to make alternative arrangements to have these cleared.

Councillor Glover declared an interest in this item as Vice President of Melksham Rugby Club.

It was agreed to move item 12e regarding requests for additional bins further up the agenda once other Members of the public had spoken.

### **Closure of Toast Office, Whitley**

The owner of the Toast Office attended the meeting as he was aware of proposals by local residents to make an application to have the Toast Office made into a community asset, following his recent decision to apply for planning permission for change of use into two residential properties.

Whilst understanding why the application had been made, he felt people were not looking at the broader picture and what needed to be done to utilize it and make it into a community asset.

They went on to explain when they took on the previous business, this was at huge risk given the costs associated with buying the building, refurbishing and restocking and had tried everything to make it a viable business at huge financial loss and therefore had sought advice, with the opinion that the business was not viable in its current location. Therefore, given the losses incurred felt he had no choice, but to apply for change of use in order to sale to recoup some of his losses and felt the application for a community asset stalled him being able to do this, which meant he was at serious risk of going bankrupt and not being able to support his family.

The current owner explained when taking on the business from the previous owners, the business was running at a loss and whilst he had increased turnover from the previous owners had not made a considerable profit due to overheads and therefore had made considerable losses. He had not taken a dividend or paid himself anything more than the minimum wage and had recently had to make two payment plans for VAT with the HMRC and in order to make the business more viable he had decided to create a café as the shop only made £200 a day from shop sales.

The current owner felt the costs associated with the village taking over the shop would be in the region of £600-£650,000, which included the purchase of the buildings, taking over the business as a going concern (including the debts), refurbishment costs, as well as stock costs and felt his family would be collateral damage in stalling the sale in order for

a group of residents to look into making the premises a community asset.

Whilst they had hoped someone would come along and take over the business, he felt this would not happen, especially given there were several similar local businesses nearby and local supermarkets providing goods more cheaply. He also felt inadequate parking had not helped his business and would also discourage potential buyers. Indeed, he was aware of several complaints of inconsiderate parking in the past, resulting in white lines being installed outside the premises, which he felt had resulted in less passing trade.

The current owner felt a better option for the village would be to have a mobile shop in a location that provided adequate parking, which would also have lower costs associated with it and felt there was a lack of perception what was involved in trying to make the business a going concern for various reasons.

They expressed a hope they would be bought out, but could not afford to sale for less than market value, otherwise they would be in financial ruin, which would not be fair to his family who were also going through other personal issues at present which was compounding pressures and reiterated his family would be collateral damage.

A member of the Community Action Shaw & Whitley (CAWS) explained members of the committee were being asked to express their views on the application for change of use of the Toast Office, which were due to conclude that evening and was aware that a group within the village were looking at ways to make it into a community asset/hub. They also stated they were aware of some within the community recognising the huge amount of effort the current owner had done to turn around the previous premises and the financial pressures that were currently placed on him.

A resident of the village explained a group of residents were looking into what could be done to save the Toast Office, as they felt it was a valuable amenity to the community, whilst not wanting to make the owner and his family collateral damage.

The group were only interested in making the Toast Office a community hub and not interested in the residential aspect of the building and were aware of other excellent examples of community hubs locally and therefore expressed a desire for more time to look at options to try and save it.

It was agreed to move item 16c regarding the Toast Office further up the agenda.

- a) **To consider closure of community shop, café and post office at Whitley and consider comments to be submitted to Wiltshire Council following request for Toast Office to be a Community Asset (request received from group of residents)**

The Clerk explained she had received a phone call earlier that day from another party who were interested in setting up a community shop, but on a different site in Whitley, similar to The Galleries, a community shop/Post Office/café, which was a new build in Freshford/Limpley Stoke.

Councillor Pile explained she had sympathy for the current owner's situation as well as understanding the depth of feeling within the village to keep the Toast Office, but recognised the lack of parking had made trading difficult which had impacted the current owners financially.

Councillor Pile explained whilst it might be a nice idea to have a village shop, was aware of a community shop in Wiltshire which had been set-up by villagers but had closed very recently due to lack of support within the village.

The Clerk clarified in October 2016 when the previous owners had put the premises on the market, the Parish Council itself had considered making it a community asset. However, Members were in two minds at the time whether to progress with the application, given the impact on the then owners and had deferred a decision to discuss this with them. However, it appeared that these discussions did not progress, and noted the Toast Office had opened in September 2017, so presumably discussion did not continue as a buyer had come forward wishing to continue with a shop on the site.

The Clerk explained if the Toast Office was declared a community asset, this only delayed the sale for 6 months in order for the community to look at options and create a plan to keep it going, it did not provide funding and delayed the property owner from selling their premises.

Councillors paid tribute to the current owner and what they had achieved in taking a previously rundown shop and creating something for the village to be proud of, having tried various ideas in order to keep the business going, such as creating a café. They also expressed a concern at what impact a delay in selling the premises would have on the current owner and their family.

It was felt by several Members that the community had not supported the Toast Office in sufficient numbers in order to keep it going, noting that those attending the café tended to be from outside the village and raised a concern that if the current owner had tried to do everything possible in order to keep the business going how would the community be able to do so.

Councillor Holder sought clarification on what residents were trying to achieve and felt the village were trying to preserve something which had failed.

Standing Orders were suspended to allow members of public to speak to this item.

A resident of Whitley clarified that the group wished to pursue the provision of a well-stocked shop only and felt there were various options which could be investigated in order to achieve this, but sought extra time in order to explore options and put a case together.

The current owner explained he had initially explored being a franchised shop with a particular retailer, however, he did not go with them as he felt their proposals were not right for the village. Therefore, they had tried to offer varying stock, even surveying people to see what they wanted and providing it, but found people did not want to pay extra, with stock (approximately £200-£300 worth a week) often going to waste.

The current owner felt the problem with the community asset approach was he still owned the premises and if the villagers were only interested in the shop aspect of his premises, he would have to absorb the debt and would lose his premises in order to recover his debts eventually. Even if he were to stay, they would have to pay rent.

Example costs associated in refitting the premises into a convenience store of £65,000 with restocking costs of between £60,000-£80,000 for a store of similar size were provided by the current owner.

The Clerk explained she had made contact with Sam Baker of Rode Post Office who was interested in running a Post Office as a satellite within the village, having had experience of doing something similar elsewhere. She had expressed a preference to have a mobile van to park up in various locations or if not possible to run an outreach Post Office from existing premises such as the village hall. They had already approached Royal Mail, however, due to the ongoing public health crisis discussion had not progressed but hoped with the support of the Parish Council, Royal Mail would be more willing to discuss proposals.

The Clerk explained if the Parish Council wished to pursue this option the mobile Post Office could visit various locations within the parish, including Bowerhill who lost their Post Office several years ago.

Councillors expressed concern at the financial position the current owner was currently in and felt his need to resolve his financial position should not be hindered and asked if the community asset proposals could satisfy all his financial needs would this help. The owner explained he would have no issues with proposals if they protected his financial future and had also held discussions with Sam Baker to look at the possibility of a mobile Post Office within the village.

The Clerk reminded Members papers had been received from Simon Day, Performance & Service Development Manager, Wiltshire Council, who was in receipt of the Community Asset application and sought the views of the Parish Council on whether they supported this application or had any representations to make. For clarification, the Clerk read out his email:

*"I have been made aware of the planning application and I will inform the case officer for the application of this nomination for them to consider. However, this application will not hold up the process of determining the planning application. It is important that local residents concerned with the proposed change of use application should send their objections to the planning application by 23 July and should not believe that this ACV nomination puts a hold on the planning application being decided.*

*I have suggested to the nominator that they back up their nomination with reasons why they believe Whitley Village shop meets the criteria that the current use (or use in the recent past) of the building, furthers the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community and reasons as to why they believe it is realistic to think that now or in the next 5 years there would continue to be non-ancillary use of the building or other land which will further (whether or not in the same way as before) the social wellbeing or social interest of the local community."*

The Chair explained a community shop could be run from other premises in the village negating the need for the community to have to find a lot of money to buy the Toast Office as a community asset.

Councillor Taylor asked if the community group had sufficient funds to buy the Toast Office premises in their entirety.

The resident of Whitley explained the group needed time to put together the right proposal and had various members within the group with experience to put together a strong proposal and felt it was incumbent upon everyone to allow this to happen and if proposals did not stack up they would walk away.

They also clarified it was just a shop they were interested in and had started to canvass local residents with approximately 900 leaflets being delivered, with a majority saying they wanted a well-stocked shop as one had not been provided for several years.

Standing Orders were reinstated.

The Clerk clarified there were only 542 dwellings not 900 dwellings in Shaw & Whitley as stated.

The Chair sought clarification on what Wiltshire Council were seeking from the Parish Council.

The Clerk read out the document from Simon Day as clarification on what was sought from the Parish Council.

*“Wiltshire Council has received a nomination from an unincorporated group, known as ‘Local People’ for Whitley Village Shop to be listed as an Asset of Community Value. A building or land in a local authority’s area will be listed as an asset of community value if in the opinion of the authority (Wiltshire Council): current non-ancillary use of the building/land or use of the building/land in the recent past, furthers the social well-being or social interests (cultural, recreational or sporting interests) of the local community) and it is realistic to think that now or in the next five years there could continue to be non-ancillary use of the building/land which will further the social well-being or social interests of the local community.”*

**Resolved:** To inform Wiltshire Council that whilst the Parish Council agrees the Toast Office’s current use furthers the social well-being or social interests of the local community, they note it is not well used and in the short time available have not seen any realistic evidence that it can be made a viable concern over the next 5 years.

To contact the Post Office to explore options of a mobile Post Office provision within the parish, particularly Shaw & Whitley.

For the developer wishing to offer a village store on their site to get in touch with the Village Hub Action Group.

008/20

**To consider the following requests for bins**

**a) Public Right of Way adjacent to Melksham Football/Rugby Ground**

A request had been received for a new bin on the Footpath through the ecological area of the Rugby Club.

Discussion ensued on who would be responsibility for emptying the bin and whether this was on private land.

Standing Orders were suspended to allow a Member of the Rugby Club to speak to this item and clarify questions raised by Members.

Standing Orders were reinstated.

The Clerk explained there were three bins on Portal Road and one of these could be used, if underutilised or the Parish Council could fund a new one via the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and solar farm funding (which was available for the next 15 years could be used to pay for a contractor to empty the bin)

**Resolved:** To investigate a bin being relocated from Portal Way to the Public Right of Way adjacent to the Rugby Club and whether Wiltshire Council would still be responsible for its emptying, given this may be on private land. If Wiltshire Council were unprepared to collect for the Parish Council to investigate further options.

009/20

**Melksham Community Response**

**a) To watch video of work undertaken by the joint partnership**

It was understood the video was 13 minutes long and the given time, the Chair sought a steer from members if they wished to view the video or defer to another meeting.

It was agreed to respectfully ask all councillors to view the video in their own time and bring forward any comments to the next council meeting.



**b) To note Report on set up and work undertaken by joint partnership and agree legal power/budget heading for costs incurred**

Various spreadsheets and reports had also been circulated showing the various jobs undertaken by the Community Response Team and the number of hours undertaken by both volunteers and officers of the Town and Parish Council in order to support Melksham's response to Covid-19 on the community. At this point, 444 volunteers had signed up to support the scheme, and there were 655 users registered for assistance.

The Clerk drew particular attention to the number of hours undertaken by volunteers that equated to paid hours to the value of £24,000 (using the living wage as an hourly rate).

The Clerk explained Melksham Area Board had contributed £1,500 from their Health & Wellbeing fund to help towards costs. Various items had been purchased such as leaflets, phone lines, headsets, user licences and advertising, however, any costs outside the £1,500 funding was to be paid for between the parish council, the town council, the Area Board and Age Friendly. With the parish council's contribution being paid for under the legal power of Section 137. The members noted that 28% of the residents helped were residents of Melksham Without, 58% from Melksham Town and the remainder from the surrounding villages both in, and outside, the Melksham Community Area.

Councillor Shea Simmonds raised a concern about the terminology used in a recent Area Board presentation by the Community Response team that the service had "not worried about boundaries". It was known that the team meant, no geographical/administrative boundaries, but it could be misinterpreted as a dual meaning word that the team did not respect user's boundaries which was concerning. The Clerk agreed to take that feedback back to the Team.

Members noted the various information contained within the reports provided.

**c) To acknowledge volunteer participation**

It was noted within the reports that nearly 2,500 volunteer hours had been provided to support the community's response to Covid-19.

The Clerk explained the local MP Michelle Donelan had recently attended a Melksham Community Response team remote meeting to thank those who set up the response group and also wished to

pass on her thanks to all the volunteers for their support in helping those in the community during the current health crisis and felt it important that the parish council also acknowledge the help the volunteers provided. The group would like to facilitate a letter from the MP to all the volunteers, this would have to be done by the group due to Data Protection, and also a thankyou card from the group and four organisations behind the scheme to thank the volunteers.

**Resolved:** That Melksham Without Parish Council would like formally acknowledge its gratitude to the contribution of all volunteers in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic and feel certain these sentiments are replicated in the wider community.

**d) To consider way forward for Melksham Community Response and make recommendation to the other joint partners**

A framework of a proposed way forward as the current emergency eased was circulated prior to the meeting for members information.

The Clerk explained the plan showed an 'exit plan', but also how to build on the good work done to date by the Community Response Team.

The Clerk explained there were various proposals as a way forward, especially with regard to those who were social isolated, as they had previously been socially isolated but not picked up by any organisation. The framework showed how those residents without a support network could be better served by a 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisation with volunteer assistance, the emergency response would still be run operationally by the council staff and the post Covid-19 Recovery strand would be addressed by the councils, with policy decisions.

This agenda item was hand in hand with the next one, as the newly formed Age Friendly Melksham CIC would be a candidate to take on the work of providing support to those residents without a support network.

**e) To consider request for virement of funding provided to Age Friendly (Wiltshire Council) to Age Friendly Melksham CIC**

Together the Parish Council, Town Council, Area Board, other parish councils in the Community Area and the Melksham Seniors had previously agreed to collectively fund £10,000 for Age Friendly Melksham to commission a consultant to work with the group to develop methods for identifying and contacting people in the Melksham community area who were socially isolated. Given

Melksham Community Response had identified a large number of local residents who were socially isolated, Age Friendly Melksham had formed a Community Interest Company, Age Friendly CIC to continue and expand on this work.

Applications for this post were currently being advertised with a closing date of 17 July.

The new Age Friendly CIC had written to the Parish Council and the other grant funders to ask if £10,000 funding allocated for an external consultant could be redeployed to pay for a new Age Friendly Co-ordinator to be employed by the CIC.

**Resolved:** It was agreed to instruct Wiltshire Council to vire the £1,071 funding (as the Parish Council's share for a consultant) over to the Age Friendly CIC to contribute towards the costs of a new Age Friendly Co-ordinator; recognising the contribution they will play in supporting the socially isolated and vulnerable residents in the town, parish and wider area.

**f) To consider approach and participation in Covid-19 Recovery Workshop on Weds 22 July at 7pm**

Unfortunately, the papers regarding this matter had been omitted from the agenda pack, although emailed directly to members when originally received, therefore, the Clerk shared the information on screen.

It was noted the Area Board were looking at priorities for recovery as the lockdown eased, in terms of economy, health and wellbeing, care, education and community recovery.

A workshop was being held on 22 July at 7pm as a next step and wished to consult with various stakeholders, including local councils in order to identify priorities for recovery. Members discussed how to move this forward, and come up with a collective view of the parish council.

Councillor Holder spoke on behalf of the Area Board to inform that the priority for the Workshop on the 22<sup>nd</sup> July was to get an agreement from the four organisations who set up the Melksham Community Response, on a way forward, possibly as outlined in the framework that had just been discussed. Cllr Holder went on to say that the framework for discussion had been carefully considered with a lot of time and effort by the two Clerks and Jon Hubbard representing the Area Board and Age Friendly to pull together the various elements. It was being tabled by the parish council for their agreement tonight, and the town council the following week, and then this way forward would inform the four discussion headlines at

the workshop on the 22<sup>nd</sup> July. These were 1. Economy 2. Health & Wellbeing 3. Community Resilience 4. Care, safeguarding and education.

As it was approaching 10.00pm the Chair asked if Members wished to suspend Standing Orders in order to continue the meeting.

It was agreed to suspend Standing Orders to allow the meeting to continue for another 15 minutes to finish off this Melksham Community Response item and to cover items on the agenda which needed an immediate response.

Following discussion, it was:

**Unanimously Resolved:** To formally agree with the structure/framework/principles proposed in the paper tabled under agenda item 7b “Melksham Community Support - The Way Forward?” as a collective way forward, and to communicate as such to the other joint partners.

**g) To acknowledge officer participation in Melksham Community Response and agree future commitment**

The Clerk sought agreement that officers would still be supporting the Melksham Community Response, with officers dealing with calls to users once a week and herself being on rota one day a week, for at least the next eight weeks.

**Resolved:** Members noted and supported their officers in helping the community response for the next few weeks until restrictions on those shielding were lifted.

**010/20**

**Finance:**

**a) To approve statement regarding play area opening**

At the Finance meeting held on 29 June 2020 a recommendation had been made that ‘as the Council could not meet some of the recommendations set out in the Government guidance, all the Parish Council play areas remain closed, but to review this when Government guidance changes.’

New advice had been issued since then from a whole host of organisations from the play industry, play inspectors, RoSPA, council professional bodies such as NALC and the SLCC, and advice sought on what other local stakeholders were planning

therefore, the Clerk sought a steer from Members on how they wished to proceed.

The Clerk explained the caretaker who was a qualified RoSPA Operational Inspector had inspected all the play areas and made repairs where necessary, whilst the play areas were still closed.

Wiltshire Council felt there was more risk in people climbing into play areas given the lifting of restrictions than in keeping them closed, even if they could not adhere to all the guidelines, therefore, had decided to open theirs, with signage in place.

The Town Council were also opening theirs, with signage, but spraying once a week with anti-bacterial spray.

The Clerk felt the Council were covered in what was reasonable if they wished to open the play areas, as that was what other councils were doing locally, it showed a consistent approach. In addition, the Clerk had also sought a quote for spraying the play areas at a cost of £150 ex VAT, plus the cost of materials; frequency to be discussed. A risk assessment would be required to be undertaken.

In the light of new advice and that inspections of the play areas had been made by the caretaker; it was:

**Resolved:** To open all play areas on the same basis as Wiltshire Council (i.e. no cleaning of equipment and no removal of equipment) and to erect appropriate signage.

Councillor Glover asked for his vote against this proposal to be recorded.

## **011/20      Community Governance Review**

The Clerk reminded Members the recommendations of Wiltshire Council's Electoral Review Committee was not to merge both the parish and town council and to support proposals by the Parish Council that the 100 houses from Sandridge and 450 East of Melksham be transferred to the town. This would mean that there would no longer be a Blackmore Ward. The recommendations include increasing the number of councillors in the Beanacre, Shaw & Whitley Ward to have 4 councillors and be named Beanacre, Shaw, Whitley and Blackmore, but makes no mention of the other Blackmore Ward councillor moving into the Bowerhill Ward. The Clerk asked if the council wished to respond to these proposals currently under public consultation, given the deadline for comments was 10 July.

**Resolved:** To support Recommendation 12 & 13 as these were in line with what the parish council had proposed and to support Wiltshire Council representations to the Local Government Boundary Committee in respect of Point 129 that the Land to the North of Sandridge Common was more appropriate in the Wiltshire Council Melksham East division, and not Bowerhill division as community coherence was more important than meeting numbers of electors on this occasion.

It was agreed the agenda items left outstanding would be deferred until the next Full Council meeting on 27 July 2020.

Meeting closed at 10.11pm

Signed .....  
Chairman 27 July 2020