

MINUTES of the Finance Committee of Melksham Without Parish Council held on Monday 8th March 2021 at 7.00 p.m.

(DUE TO THE ON-GOING COVID 19 PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS THIS WAS A VIRTUAL MEETING, WITH MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC BEING ABLE TO ACCESS THE MEETING VIA THE PUBLISHED ZOOM INVITATION, THIS MEETING WAS DUE TO BE STREAMED LIVE STREAMED VIA YOUTUBE HOWEVER THERE WAS A TECHNICAL ISSUE AND IT WAS SUBSEQUENTLY UPLOADED)

Present: Cllrs. Richard Wood (Council Chair), John Glover (Council Vice-Chair & Committee Chair), Alan Baines (Committee Vice Chair), Paul Carter, Paul Taylor Nick Holder and Paul Taylor (From 7:02pm).

Officers: Teresa Strange (Clerk) and Marianne Rossi (Finance & Amenities Officer).

Housekeeping & Announcements: Cllr Glover welcomed all to the meeting.

352/20 Apologies

None.

353/20 Declarations of Interest

None

354/20 Dispensation Requests for this Meeting

None.

7.02pm Councillor Taylor joined the meeting

355/20 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 (Items 9 & 10) as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted. This is in line with Standing Order 3d: "That in the view of the special/confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the public be temporarily excluded and they are instructed to withdraw"

Resolved: Items 9 and 10 to be discussed in closed session for reason B terms of a tender.

356/20 Public Participation

There were no members of the public present.

357/20 To Review Risk Register

Members reviewed the Risk Register, which had been updated by the Clerk and Finance & Amenities Officer. It was highlighted that a risk matrix (Red, Amber, Green rating) was still outstanding to do, but it had previously been resolved by the council to do this after the election in May with the new council. The Committee were happy with the additions made to the risk register.

Recommendation: The council accept the risk register.

358/20 To note actions undertaken from 2020/21 interim Internal Audit report observations

Members noted the actions undertaken from the Internal Audit report. It was noted that an addition had been made to financial regulation 5.1 (1st March 2021 Full Council), to give the Clerk the authority to remove a member or officer from the bank mandate immediately after they had resigned from the council; and to update the council at the next appropriate meeting.

The risk register had been reviewed as part of this meeting, and then will be done again in June with the new Finance Committee after the May election.

The approval of the budget was put as a separate line item on the agenda when the council approved the precept and budget for the 2021/22 financial year.

The External Audit report has now been uploaded to the council website but it was noted that it had already been published on all parish council noticeboards.

359/20 To receive latest update on Berryfield Village Hall Tender process and agree how/who to open tenders under Covid restrictions (6th April) and approve financial checks to be undertaken on potential contractor.

Members had received a list compiled by the Project Manager summarising all expressions of interest and information received from contractors who wish to tender for the New Berryfield Village Hall. Councillor Glover explained that tenders are due to be returned to the parish council office no later than 2pm on the 2nd April. The Clerk explained that under the council's financial regulations, an Officer plus at least one member of the council would need to be present when the tenders were opened. It was also noted that the Project Manager would need to attend the tender opening so that he could pass the tenders on to the cost consultant.

The Clerk explained that as the 2nd April was Good Friday the next available working day to open the tenders was Tuesday 6th April and sought a steer from members on how they wished for this to be done under Covid restrictions. Councillor Wood felt that if a big

space such as the council meeting room was used with people wearing masks, this could be a feasible option. Councillor Holder suggested that the first person who opens the tender could take a picture on their phone and send it around to the other members in the

room, so that everyone is not crowding around the same area. If a photo was taken it would also show the date and time of when the tenders were opened.

Councillor Glover had a query on what other organisations were doing with regards to tenders. The Clerk advised that when she attended a Wiltshire Council Clerks briefing, she had asked how they would be conducting meetings after 7th May as the government legislation to hold virtual meetings ends on that date. She was advised that meetings are classed as business rather than social so would be allowed to go ahead unless government legislation was extended to continue to allow virtual meetings to be held. The Clerk also advised that she would have to investigate whether the council could use the meeting room as it may contravene with Gompels Covid safety measures. She suggested that two people could use the council office behind the perspex screens with each person either side of the room which would give a 2-metre distance, with use of the kitchen and its hatch too. The person who opens the tenders could hold them up against the perspex screen to show the other person in the room the tender value. She explained that once the tenders had been opened, they will be sent off to the cost consultant to analyse.

It was suggested that another option could be that one member could do this via zoom while two people could be in the office at a 2-metre social distance. The Clerk highlighted that the Project Manager doesn't use Zoom so this would mean a council member would need to do this from home via Zoom.

After a detailed discussion, members felt that the Clerk and Project Manager should open the tenders at the parish council office behind the perspex screens with Councillor Glover as the council member joining via Zoom.

The Clerk highlighted that the Project Manager has recommended that prior to entering into a contract with a contractor the council should take up references and commission detailed company and financial reports.

Recommendation 1: The Clerk and the Project Manager to open tenders at the parish council office on Tuesday 6th April with Councillor Glover joining via Zoom. Councillors Wood and Baines as reserves.

Recommendation 2: The Clerk to ask the Project Manager for some guidance on how the council commission financial reports and references on the chosen contractor.

360/20 To agree way forward on bookable pitches at Bowerhill Sports Field over summer months (further to feedback received from contractors and users)

The Clerk advised that the Chippenham & District league was not holding anymore league matches this season, but are still continuing with Cup games, up until 31st May. There are currently no plans for the Trowbridge & District league to continue this season. Future of Football will not be hosting any home games in August but will be

scheduling summer training camps which will be at the Sports Field but off the pitches. Following conversations with JH Jones with regards to when the best time to rest the pitches would be it was confirmed that they would be happy for this to happen in either July or August. The Clerk suggested that the three weeks rest could begin the last week

of July and end in the middle of August, this gives the adult teams an opportunity to schedule friendlies to get ready for the new season at the end of August.

Recommendation: The council rest all pitches at the Bowerhill Sports Field from the last week of July until the middle of August so that it gives the adult teams an opportunity to schedule friendlies to get ready for the new season in September.

In line with Standing Order 3d the following agenda items were held in Committee.

361/20 To approve play area repair quotations: The Clerk explained that these are repairs that had been identified in the quarterly written play area inspection report just undertaken by I D Verde. The Clerk queried whether members wished to do the gate at Berryfield Play area as the council had previously decided not to do it due to the proposal for the Melksham Link canal going through the play area in the future. The Committee felt that as there was no timeframe on the canal this repair should be done. The Clerk highlighted that at a previous Asset Management Committee meeting member decided against replacing the backboard at the Bowerhill Pavilion basketball court. This was due to this being a cosmetic issue rather than a safety issue, therefore members felt that this could continue to be monitored.

Recommendation: To approve the quotation for I D Verde to undertake the following repairs:

Removal of chicken mesh at Kestrel Court Play Area	£ 48.19 + VAT
Repaint gate at Berryfield Play Area	£252.84 + VAT
Bench at Shaw Play Area	£ 91.19 + VAT
Total Cost	£392.22 + VAT

The quote for replacing the basketball backboard at Bowerhill Sports Field was not to be undertaken as per minute 175/20e) (Asset Management Committee 16th November 2020). It was noted that it was included in the quotation as item arising from the recent Quarterly Inspections.

362/20 To approve parish weed spraying quotations

It was advised that quotes had been received from Complete Weed Control to undertake weed spraying in the Spring and Autumn to the kerb lines, bus shelters in the parish and the Bowerhill Sports Field car park. The Clerk advised that the cost of this had already been budgeted for in the financial year 2021/22.

Councillor Glover advised that the council was still awaiting a report from Councillor Taylor on an alternative option to using glyphosate. Councillor Taylor advised that his report on this had stalled, but understood that there had been an alternative option discussed which had been used by other councils and queried what the status of this was. Councillor Glover advised that the council had previously approved to go ahead with glyphosate on the basis that this was not going to be sprayed over fields until an alternative had been identified. Councillor Baines understood that the Caretaker was

using an alternative option, the Clerk advised that this was due to be done in Spring in a small section of the Bowerhill Sports Field car park. It was felt that the contractors should leave a quarter of the car park so that the Caretaker could use the alternative option so that the results of this could be reviewed.

Recommendation: The council approve the quotation from Complete Weed Control of £1,372.00 per application to undertake weed spraying in parish the Spring and Autumn. To ask Complete Weed Control to leave an area in the Bowerhill Sports Field car park/landscape area so that an alternative (non glysohate) option can be used by the Caretaker as a trial.

The Clerk explained to members that a query had been raised on the Risk Register that was confidential due to a Staffing matter, and as the committee was currently in closed session asked members whether this could be discussed.

7.30pm the Finance & Amenities Officer left the meeting as the next item related to staffing.

363/20 Risk Register

Held in closed session

The Clerk advised that she had a concern that if face to face meetings have to go ahead again from 7th May and if the office was to open back up in May or June, some staff members (and new councillors) might not be vaccinated. She queried with members on whether there needed to be a policy on this. Councillor Holder explained that his understanding was that there were a number of trigger points to opening things back up which would need to be met first. His understanding from the Government guidance was that there would not be a full release until no sooner than 21st June and until this point the advice was still to work from home and queried why this would be changed. The Clerk explained that as of 7th May the government legislation which allows meetings to be held virtually runs out unless this is extended. She advised that an annual council has to be held within 14 days of an election and an annual parish meeting has to be held before 1st June which would be two public facing meetings. The Clerk explained that she had spoken to other councils to see how they were going to conduct meetings and one had suggested that they were going to do their annual council face to face and then the council would pass delegated powers to the Clerk and go back to virtual meetings. She advised that these meetings would not have any legal power and would only be to inform the Clerk. Members felt that there needed to be more guidance on this from the government and from Wiltshire Council.

Recommendation: The Clerk to write to democratic services at Wiltshire Council to ask for guidance on how they will be conducting their meetings after 7th May.

Meeting closed at 9.40 pm