

MINUTES of the Finance Committee of Melksham Without Parish Council held on Monday 4th March 2024 at Melksham Without Parish Council Offices, Melksham Community Campus (First Floor), Market Place, Melksham, SN12 6ES at 7.00pm

Present: Councillors John Glover (Chair of Council & Committee), David Pafford (Vice Chair of Council), Alan Baines, Richard Wood, Shona Holt, John Doel and Mark Harris.

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

439/23 Welcome, Housekeeping & Apologies:

Councillor Glover welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the evacuation procedure in the event of a fire to those present. It was noted that this meeting was being recorded and would be published on YouTube following the meeting and deleted once the minutes were approved.

Councillor Shea Simonds had tendered his apologies as for medical reasons; this reason for his absence was accepted. Council Glover explained that Councillor Harris was not a member of this committee but was attending as a substitute for Councillor Shea-Simonds.

440/23 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Holt declared an interest in the Berryfield Village Hall grant application as Chair of the Hall Trust. Councillor Wood also declared an interest in the Berryfield Village Hall grant application as a trustee of the Village Hall. Councillor Harris declared an interest in the Bowerhill Village Hall grant application as Chair of the Village Hall. These members did not vote on those grant applications.

The Clerk, although not a voting member, declared an interest as a cheque signatory for the Melksham Gardeners' Society. Although, she is no longer a trustee of 4youth, for transparency highlighted this organisation as she was a named director in the period of accounts submitted, which accompanied the grant application. Her daughter also worked for this organisation.

441/23 Dispensation Requests

None.

442/23 To consider holding items in Closed Session due to confidential nature:

It was advised that there were no items to be held in closed session.

443/23 Public Participation:

There were five members of the public present at the meeting who were attending on behalf of organisations that had submitted grant applications and wished to observe the

process. Councillor Franks was present at the meeting; however, he was not a member of the Finance Committee and was at the meeting as an observer.

444/23 Grant Aid:

a) To note the Grant Aid policy prior to reviewing grant applications.

Members noted the grant aid policy.

b) To note budget provision for Grant Aid 2024/25

Members noted the following budget provisions for 2024/25 grant aid:

S133 Village Hall Grants	£20,000
S137 General Grants	£17,000
S144 Tourism	<u>£ 700</u>
Total	£37,700

There was also £8,375.67 available in the Community Projects/ Match Funding reserve.

It was noted that the parish council had the General Power of Competence and, therefore, did not need to be tied to a maximum spend under S137 of the Local Government Act. The parish council has previously agreed that it would be wise to keep these budget headings, as they may be required again in the future if, at the May 2025 election, not enough members were elected. It was noted that for a council to gain the General Power of Competence, at least 80% of its members must be elected, not co-opted.

c) To consider Grant Aid applications for 2024/25

Councillor Glover advised members that 35 applications for funding had been received with requests totalling £42,621.22.

	TYPE	ORGANISATION	Awarding in 2024/25
SECTION 133 GRANTS (HALLS)			
1	Other halls	Bowerhill Village Hall Trust	£5,000
2	Owned by MWPC	Shaw Hill Playing Field and Village Hall	£9,250
3	Owned by MWPC	Berryfield Village Hall	£4,800
SECTION 133 GRANTS (HALLS) total			£19,050
SECTION 137 GRANTS			
4	Action Groups	Bowerhill Residents Action Group (BRAG)	£450
5	Action Groups	Berryfield & Semington Rd Action Group (BASRAG)	£500

6	Action Groups	Community Action Whitley Shaw (CAWS)	£1,290
	Action Groups Total		£2,240
7	Youth	4Youth (South West) - formerly Young Melksham	£3,000
8	Youth	Bowerhill Baby & Toddler Group	£1,643.42
	Youth Total		£4,643
9	Support Groups	Group Five	£500
10	Support Groups	Melksham PHAB Club	£400
11	Support Groups	Wiltshire Air Ambulance	£500
12	Support Groups	Melksham Community First Responders	£930
13	Support Group	HELP Counselling Services	£200
14	Support Group	Life Education Centres Ltd Wiltshire	£400
15	Support Group	Melksham Community Money Advice	£300
16	Support Group	Age UK Wiltshire	£300
17	Support Group	Wiltshire Citizens Advice	£1,000
18	Support Group	Alzheimer's Support	£400
19	Support Group	Meadowbrook (Wiltshire) CIC	£340
20	Support Group	FearFree Charity (Formally Splitz Support Service)	£500
	Support Groups Total		£5,770
21	Community	Melksham Food & River Festival	£500
22	Community	that meeting space administered by GoodNews Church	£300
23	Community	Crimestoppers Trust – Wiltshire Volunteer Committee	£150
24	Community	Melksham Carnival	£1,000
25	Community	Friends of Shurnhold Fields	£1,000
	Community Total		£2,950
26	Community Info	Shaw & Whitley Connect	£250
	Community Info Total		£250
27	Clubs	AFC Melksham (Disabled)	£300
28	Clubs	Melksham Gardeners' Society	£250
29	Clubs	Melksham Amateur Swimming Club	£500
30	Clubs	Shaw & Whitley Garden Club	£200
31	Clubs	Melksham Cricket Club	£220

32	Clubs	Melksham WI	£200
33	Clubs	Wiltshire Youth Canoe Club (WYCC)	£500
34	Clubs	Shaw and Whitley Art Group	£250
		Clubs Total	£2,420
		Section 137 GRANTS Total	£18,273
	SECTION 144 GRANTS (TOURISM)		
35	Tourism	Melksham Tourist Information Centre	£600
		Tourism Total	£600
		Grand Total	£37,923.42

22. that meeting space administered by GoodNews Church: Members queried with the Clerk whether this organisation was eligible for grant funding from the parish council, bearing in mind clause 8 of the grant aid policy, which states that the council is unable to fund church buildings. The Clerk confirmed that in the application, this organisation did appear to have spilt out their accounts between that meeting space and the Good News Church. She clarified that this organisation hosts a number of organisations and provides a space for residents to access activities, and community initiatives; and has been useful for new organisations starting out to book this smaller venue until they had enough numbers to commit to a bigger venue. It was confirmed that any grant awarded to this organisation would not be funding the church; with the building being rented separately.

24. Melksham Carnival: Councillor Glover highlighted that part of the grant funding request from this organisation was for professional entertainment and queried with members their thoughts on providing funding towards this. Members agreed to suspend standing orders so that a member of the Carnival could speak on this item. She explained that the carnival does not get any funding from anyone who enters it, as it is free to enter. There is no cost to the public to watch the carnival, and they do not make any money, apart from donations that have been collected in the bucket collections, which isn't sustainable. She advised that if the schools and businesses were relied upon entirely to put on the carnival due to money constraints, it may reduce the number of people who enter the following year. This is why professional entertainment is required to attract more people to attend. Councillor Glover queried whether the organisation had applied to Melksham Town Council for funding; the representative from the carnival confirmed that they had successfully been awarded £1,000 from the town council.

The committee reconvened and agreed to award this organisation £1,000 as it was considered that although this event happened in the town, members of the parish would attend.

25. Friends of Shurnhold Fields: It was noted that Shurnhold Fields was jointly owned by both the parish and town council. The volunteer group maintains the field for the use of the community and has asked for funding towards the group's public liability insurance as well as garden tools to continue maintaining the field. The Clerk explained that currently the Friends of Shurnhold Fields are undertaking work under the parish council's

public liability insurance and have been encouraged to obtain their own. This is a step to make the group more self-sufficient, similar to BRAG (Bowerhill Residents Action Group). She explained that the council does hold the s106 funding for the maintenance of the field, so funding could be provided from this reserve with agreement from the town council. In addition, this group had applied to the Area Board for match funding towards a new mower for the field but had been asked to withdraw the application because the Area Board felt that all of the funding should come from the s106 maintenance fund. Councillor Glover felt that the items applied for are required by the group and is concerned that if the council does not provide the group with support with this, they may fold. It was noted that last year the group was due to disband because of a lack of volunteers; however, new volunteers have since come forward, and a strong group is being built. After a detailed discussion, members agreed to award the organisation £1,000 which is half the funding applied for, and suggested that the group also apply to the town council for a grant.

34. Shaw and Whitley Art Group: The Clerk wished to draw members attention to the fact that this group has requested that any successful grant be awarded via payment to an individual rather than the organisation. She explained that there was nothing in the council's grant aid policy which states that organisations have to have their own bank account set up, but she just wanted to make members aware of this. It was noted that this group was struggling for members and may have to close if no new participants attended. It was confirmed that if this group did close, any grant funding awarded to them would have to be returned to the parish council as per the grant aid policy and it looked as though the group ran on a cash basis, and didn't have a bank account. It was also suggested that there were other art groups in the area where the current attendees could join if they were struggling for members. Councillor Pafford felt that the council should support groups in the villages around the parish, and therefore some funding should be awarded to this organisation. The Clerk also suggested that the council could help the group with advertising for members, which was agreed upon. Councillor Wood also felt that the group should be made aware that if they do have to fold, there are other art groups available to join around the parish.

It was noted that following the agreement to award the above organisations a grant, there was an overspend in the s137 grant budget heading. Members agreed that the £950 surplus in the s133 village hall budget and the £100 surplus in the s144 tourism heading should be vired over to the s137 grant heading. This leaves an overall deficit of £223.42 in the budget for grants, which was agreed to be taken from the community match funding reserve.

Recommendation 1: The Council award grants to organisations as per the list detailed above.

Recommendation 2: The council to offer to assist the Shaw and Whitley Art Group in advertising for new members to join the group. In the event that the group has to fold due to a lack of members, they should be informed that there are other art groups available around the parish.

Recommendation 3: The council vire £950 from the Village Hall grant budget and £100 from the tourism budget to the s137 grant budget. The £223.42 grant overspend on grants to come from the community match funding reserve.

d) To agree way forward for payment of grant awards

Councillor Glover reported that the council had received some comments from a grant applicant saying that it was difficult for them to cash in the grant due to banks closing, and suggested that it would be much easier for the award to be paid via BACS. Councillor Glover explained that the normal process was for the council to invite successful organisations to the Annual Parish meeting where they would be presented with the cheque. It was also an opportunity for the organisations to say a few words about their activities during the year. There was a concern that if grants were not presented this way, there would be low attendance at the meeting. Members agreed that the Annual Parish was a celebration of a year in the parish, and the meeting had been transformed since grants were awarded at the meeting. It was felt that this needed to continue, and while members appreciated that banks were closing, some did give the option to either deposit cheques via a banking app or pay them into the post office. It was acknowledged that some organisations may not have access to an app to deposit a cheque; therefore, it was felt that as an alternative, organisations should be offered the option of being paid by BACS. Members were clear that if organisations wished to be paid by BACS, they would have to provide these details at the Annual Parish meeting, not before or after the meeting. Members agreed that it was an expectation of the council for members of each organisation to attend the meeting in order to receive their grant award.

Recommendation: The council continue to award grants via cheque but give the option to organisations to pay grant awards by BACS on the proviso that they provide these details at the Annual Parish meeting only and still attend.

445/23 Bowerhill Sports Field:

a) To note update on application to Suez for the landfill tax grant

The Clerk advised that the application for this grant had not been submitted and would be submitted for the next round of funding in May. She had realised that if the grant was submitted to this round of funding, the council would be in competition with Berryfield Village Hall, which was also applying to this fund. She explained that although this delayed the projects, all of the maintenance for the field could still be undertaken before the new season.

b) To consider applying to the Football Foundation grant fund for drainage and approve quotation to undertake pitch assessment required

Members noted that there had been an issue with drainage at the sports field during this football season, which has resulted in several matches having to be cancelled. Officers had found some grant funding available from the Football Foundation to improve drainage. In order to apply for the funding, the council would have to undertake a 2pitch power assessment², which determines what work is required at the field. It was noted that the fund can provide up to 75% of the cost for any work required, but it would not fund any routine maintenance or any work undertaken prior to the application being submitted. Officers had contacted the grounds contractors for a quotation to undertake the pitch power assessment; however, they had come back to say that there would be no charge for this service. Members agreed that the council

should apply for this funding. It was also noted that the council was also going to apply for funding from the Suez Fund for drainage works on the middle 11-aside pitch.

Recommendation: The council apply to the Football Foundation for funding towards pitch drainage at the Bowerhill Sports Field following the pitch power assessment being undertaken by the council's grounds contractors.

c) To consider applying to the Football Foundation for the grass pitch maintenance fund and approve costs associated with grounds maintenance course required.

Councillor Glover reported that officers had found some funding from the Football Foundation for grass pitch maintenance. It was noted that this fund was to enhance the pitches to improve their quality rather than provide funding for routine maintenance such as grass cutting and line marking, which is already being done. In order for the council to apply for this funding, a pitch power assessment on all of our pitches would have to be undertaken, which the council's ground contractors could do. If successful, this fund provides funding each year for six years but will pay a reduced percentage of the initial grant value every two years. The council will also have to provide ongoing, twice-yearly pitch power inspections over the following ten-year period.

The Finance & Amenities Officer advised that there was a requirement for two people from the organisation to complete the online Level 1 Football Grounds Maintenance course at a cost of £46 each, and the certificate will need to be submitted to the Football Foundation before any grant funding can be released. It was queried whether the parish council's contractors had this certificate and, if so, whether it could be submitted. The Finance & Amenities Officer advised that she would have to check this out because it's understood that it has to be members of the organisation, so she was unsure whether this would be accepted. The Clerk wondered whether it should be the Parish Caretaker and the Finance & Amenities Officer who undertake the qualification. She explained that the Finance & Amenities Officer was the one who oversaw the pitch bookings at the field and made decisions in conjunction with either the grounds contractor or Clerk as to whether the matches should go ahead. The Caretaker was also the one who attended the field on a Thursday and advised on the condition of the pitch, so it may be beneficial for him to do it as well. Councillor Holt felt that it was very important that the council invest in their staff, so fully supported two members undertaking this training.

Recommendation 1: The council apply to the Football Foundation for funding towards the maintenance of pitches at the Bowerhill Sports Field following the pitch power assessment being undertaken by the council's grounds contractors.

Recommendation 2: The council agree for two members of staff to undertake the Level 1 Football Grounds Maintenance course at a total cost of £92 including VAT (£38.33 each + VAT)

d) To consider fees and charges for the 2024/25 football season

Members reviewed the current sports field charges for the current season. It was agreed that, bearing in mind the increasing costs of running the pavilion, these charges would need to be increased. It was noted that last year the council increased their charges by 10%. Councillor Baines explained that he had done some calculations based on a 3.8% increase on all charges, which he felt was an acceptable increase. After a detailed discussion, members felt that a 4% increase rounded up to the nearest 50p would be suitable to be applied to the sports field

Hire of outside toilet and car park for training sessions	2024/25
Under 25 people	£17.00
From 26-50 people	£23.00
Over 50 people	£34.50

charges to come into effect from 1st August 2024. This means that the charges will be as follows:

Football Pitch	2024/25
Club – per match – adult with use of pavilion	£69.00
Club- per match – adult without use of pavilion	£40.00
Club – per match – junior 9v9 pitch without use of pavilion	£34.50
Club – per match – junior 7v7 pitch without use of pavilion	£29.00
Club – per match – junior 5v5 pitch without use of pavilion	£23.00
Blanket Booking- Future of Football FC (FoF FC)	£115 per weekend (For the use of Youth Pitches only)

Training Camps for Future of Football Ltd	2024/25
Includes use of car park, changing rooms to store bags for the day and outside toilet	£115.00 per session

Bowerhill Bomber race	£86.00
Colin Fitness (use of one changing room)	£11.50

Hire of Kitchen and games room	2024/25
To charge an hourly rate of £5.75 per hour with a minimum charge of £11.50 per session.	
1 hour hire	£11.50
2-hour hire	£11.50
3-hour hire	£17.50
4-hour hire	£23.00
5-hour hire	£29.00

Recommendation: The council increase the sports field and pavilion hire charges to the fees listed above for the 2024/25 football season, to come into effect from the 1st August 2024.

446/23 Audit and Year End:

a) To note year end closure on accounting system scheduled to take place on Thursday 18th April 2024

Members noted that the year-end close on the accounting system was due to be undertaken on Thursday 18th April 2024.

b) To note 2nd Internal Audit visit for 2023/24 due Friday 5th April 2024

It was noted that the internal auditor was due to visit on 5th April to undertake his second internal audit of the 2023/24 financial year.

c) To appoint Internal Auditor for 2024/25

The Clerk advised that the appointment of the internal auditor for the next financial year was something the council reviewed on an annual basis. Members acknowledged that the internal auditor had to be independent, competent, and have knowledge of the public sector. She explained that a few years ago, at the request of the council, officers obtained some quotations from other internal auditors in the area. This was following queries from some members as to whether it was best practice for the council to change auditors, as they had been with the current contractors for some years. The council concluded at the time that some of the auditors who quoted were not independent because they lived in the parish, and the quotes provided by others were much higher than what is charged by the current auditor. The Clerk explained that although the council has been with IAC Audit and Consultancy for some years, other auditors from the company have undertaken audits. In terms of competency, the auditor has been working nationally in a forum for internal auditors.

Members felt that, as the council was receiving good service from the current internal auditor, who was both competent and independent, he should be appointed for the 2024/25 financial year.

Recommendation: The council appoint IAC Audit and Consultancy as the internal auditor for the 2024/25 financial year.

447/23 Bank Signatories: To note confirmation of bank signatories listed on Lloyds Bank following recommendation from the internal auditor.

It was noted that at the first internal audit visit, the auditor recommended the council contact Lloyds Bank to confirm that all signatories listed on the bank were correct. Officers have undertaken this task and can confirm that all signatories on the bank are correct.

448/23 CCLA: To receive update on CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund

The Finance & Amenities Officer advised that the application form had been sent to the CCLA and was waiting to hear back on the next steps.

449/23 Public Works Loan: To note public works loan has now been paid off in full.

Members noted that the public works loan had now been paid off in full. It was confirmed that the full amount owing on the loan was £286,482.80 which was paid off in January. The Public Works Loan Board had confirmed that all funds had been received.

Meeting closed at 20.28pm

Signed.....
Chairman, Monday 25th March 2024