

**MINUTES of the Finance Committee of Melksham Without Parish Council held on
Monday 19th May 2025 at Melksham Without Parish Council Offices,
Melksham Community Campus (First Floor), Market Place,
Melksham, SN12 6ES at 8.37pm**

Present: Councillors David Pafford (Vice Chair of Council), John Doel, Chris Griffiths, Alan Baines, Richard Wood and Mark Blackham.

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

Zoom: There were no members of the public present on Zoom. Councillor Glover joined the meeting at 9.17pm via Zoom and understood that he was unable to vote at the meeting as he was not classed as being present under current legislation.

Housekeeping: The Clerk welcomed all to the meeting. As there were no members of the public present, the housekeeping message was not read out. Everyone present was aware that the meeting was being recorded and would be published on YouTube following the meeting.

038/25 Apologies:

Apologies had been received from Councillor Glover who was on holiday, this reason for absence was accepted.

The Clerk invited nominations for the Chair of the Finance Committee for 2025/26.

039/25 Chairman & Vice Chair of Finance Committee for 2025/26:

a) Election of Chair of Finance Committee:

Resolved: That Councillor Glover be Chair of the Finance Committee for 2025/26.

In the absence of Councillor Glover, the Clerk invited nominations for the Vice Chair of the Finance Committee for 2025/26.

b) Election of Vice-Chair of Finance Committee:

There were no nominations for Vice-Chair; therefore, the Clerk advised that this item could be deferred to the next Finance Committee meeting, but in Councillor Glover's absence, a member would need to put themselves forward to Chair the meeting this evening. Councillor Baines stepped forward, and it was resolved that Councillor Baines would Chair the meeting this evening.

Resolved: Councillor Baines to Chair this evenings Finance Committee meeting and the election of the Vice Chair to be deferred to the next Finance Committee meeting.

Councillor Baines took the Chair.

c) Scheme of Delegation:

Members noted the scheme of delegation and terms of reference for the Finance Committee.

040/25 Declarations of Interest

None.

041/25 Dispensation Requests for this Meeting

None.

042/25 To consider holding items in Closed Session due to confidential nature:

Resolved: Agenda item 10c to be held in closed session 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 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 for the following reason: potential for legal proceedings.

043/25 Public Participation:

There were no members of the public present.

044/25 Insurance:

a) Insurance Cover for year commencing 1st June 2025 including Cyber Security:

Members reviewed the insurance schedule for the new insurance year starting from 1st June 2025. It was noted that the forthcoming insurance year was the last of a three-year long-term agreement with the insurance company. Officers had compared the level of insurance cover quoted in the policy documentation with the level of cover required for the parish council assets as detailed in the asset register. It was noted that the policy schedule detailed £2,997,222.34 of cover for all of the parish council assets against a value of £2,996,562.62 of cover required as per the asset register. Members were made aware that the building insurance also included Berryfield Village Hall as per the terms of the lease, and this cost element would be charged back to the Village Hall Trust.

The Clerk drew members' attention to the fact that the asset register value for general contents was £1,000 more than the level of cover detailed on the insurance schedule. She explained that this included items such as replacement stationery if the building burnt down, for example, which was a 'finger in the air' value on the asset register, so she was not concerned that this was slightly lower on the insurance schedule of cover. Members were also aware that the Davey Play Area was included in the insurance even though it had not been adopted by the parish council yet so that it is in place for when it is adopted.

It was noted that the fidelity insurance cover was £1m, and although this was currently adequate for the councils' funds, officers would need to keep an eye on this, especially when large amounts of funds, such as CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy), are received.

The Clerk explained that the cyber insurance was a separate policy which was obtained by Galligher insurance brokers, as the insurers for the parish insurance do not provide cyber cover. There were a few things that needed to be updated in the statement of fact to reflect the councils needs which had been communicated to the insurance company. Officers had not received a response to the email. In addition, officers had been made aware by the insurance brokers that the insurers were no longer providing AvastCloud Care with the policy. This was something that members were due to discuss on the next agenda item. Members agreed to this level of cover.

Resolved 1: The council accept the level of insurance cover proposed for the parish insurance.

Resolved 2: The council accept the level of cover in place for cyber security as per the schedule.

b) Correspondence from cyber insurance company regarding vast CloudCare:

The Clerk explained that a requirement of the cyber cover was for all council devices to be covered by a business-grade firewall and antivirus package, which was provided by the insurer. Officers have been informed that this will not be included with any policy moving forward and the requirement for business-grade firewalls and antivirus software is no longer required. The Clerk explained, however, that included in the financial regulations which members were due to review at the next Finance Committee meeting was that any member doing online banking for the council needed to have adequate virus protection.

Officers have been in consultation with the parish council's IT contractor with regard to who would need virus protection and whether the whole council needed it on their laptops. It was noted that all parish council laptops had a Windows Firewall built into the device and there was a free version of Avast that could be used on councillor laptops. He felt that for Councillors who were logging into their Microsoft account via Office 365, this version was adequate. It was noted that if a virus got into a Councillor laptop, it would be contained to that machine only and would not spread to the council networks. For the office, 5 devices (3 officer laptops, 1 server computer, and 1 meeting room device) are felt to require a paid version due to the fact that all of these devices have access to the council's shared drive. If a virus got into one of these machines, it is very likely that it would get into the shared drive and infect the whole council network. The contractor also felt that for those members who log on and authorise online payments, the Avast free version would not be adequate and would need a paid version of the software.

Officers have had a look around to obtain some costs for an adequate package depending on what members wished to do. Their finding was as follows:

Norton Small Business:

£129.99 + VAT per year for 5 users (£69.99 + VAT for the first year)-

This would cover all officer laptops and the server pc but the maximum devices that can be covered is 10 at a cost of £199.99 + VAT per year (£99.99 + VAT for the first year). This would therefore not cover councillor laptops even if it was decided to only cover the Finance Committee members.

Avast Essential Business Security:

13 Councillors plus 4 office devices (£388.01 + VAT for first year)

After a discussion, members felt that all of the office laptops and computers should be covered due to having direct access to the councils' electronic records as well as the seven Finance Committee laptops due to them occasionally being used to undertake online authorising. For clarity, this would mean that 12 devices would need to be covered.

It was noted that the council would need to go with the Avast Essential Business Security, as the Norton Small Business antivirus does not cover enough laptops. It was noted that the price above includes the whole council; however, the Finance & Amenities Officer confirmed that there will be a reduction in the cost due to the number of devices required to be covered being reduced.

Recommendation: The council purchase and install Avast Essential Business Security on the five office devices and the seven Finance Committee members laptops (12 devices) for the reasons provided above.

c) Insurance cover quotation:

Members reviewed the quotation of £4,117.15 from Zurich for the parish insurance. A separate quotation had been received from the insurance broker Galligher, on behalf of Talbot Underwriting Ltd via Channing Lucas & Partners Ltd t/a Optimum Speciality Risks of £417.36.

Resolved 1: The council approve the quotation of £4,117.15 from Zurich Municipal for the council's parish insurance.

Resolved 2: The council approve the quotation of £417.36 from Galligher on behalf of Talbot Underwriting Ltd via Channing Lucas & Partners Ltd t/a Optimum Speciality Risks for cyber insurance cover

d) Amount to invoice Berryfield Village Hall Trust for building insurance:

As already mentioned at this meeting, as per the terms of the lease with Berryfield Village Hall Management Trust, the parish council insures the building and charges back that element of the cost to the Trust. The Finance & Amenities Officer advised that although she had asked the insurance company for the breakdown of costs, they were yet to come back. It was agreed to defer this to a future meeting when the cost was known.

Recommendation: To defer the amount to invoice Berryfield Village Hall for building insurance to a future meeting once the cost was known.

e) Payment for Insurance Cover- 1st June 2025-31st May 2026

As per Min.020/25d of the Annual Council meeting on 12th May, the Finance Committee has delegated powers to approve and pay for insurance cover, as this must be paid in time for the cover to start by 1st June 2025.

Resolved 1: The council pay Zurich Municipal (Zurich Town & Parish, Insurer Trust Account) £4,117.15 for parish insurance cover for the period 1st June 2025- 31st May 2026.

Resolved 2: The council pay Arthur J Gallagher £417.36 for cyber insurance cover from Talbot Underwriting Ltd via Channing Lucas & Partners Ltd t/a Optimum Speciality Risks for the period 1st June 2025- 31st May 2026.

045/25 Reserves: Funds held in Election reserve:

Members noted that there was currently £13,233 available in the elections reserve. The Clerk explained that the parish council has always had to pay for a casual vacancy, so previously had around £3,000 in the reserve to cover this expenditure. She explained that the May 2025 elections were the first time that parish and town councils were expected to pay a share of these costs for an ordinary election, which is why there was a large amount of funds in the reserve. Now that the results of the elections are known and the parish council did not have any contested elections, the Clerk queried whether members may wish to allocate some of the funds held in this reserve towards another project. Members discussed this and felt that it would be prudent to hold enough funds in the reserve to cover a casual election in Bowerhill, which is the largest ward in the parish. Members felt that the funds should be left in the reserve at this juncture but note that funds are available in this reserve for other projects if required.

9.17pm Councillor Glover joined the meeting via Zoom.

Recommendation: The council leave the elections reserve as it currently stands in the knowledge that there are funds available in this reserve should they be required for future projects.

046/25 Bowerhill Sports Field: Charge for youth organisation tournament being held on the weekend of 14th & 15th June:

Councillor Baines reported that Future of Football FC are hosting a summer tournament across the weekend of 14th and 15th June at the Bowerhill Sports Field. As this was a one-off event, there is currently no charging schedule in place, and therefore, officers were asking members to advise on how much to charge the organisation, bearing in mind that this was for the community organisation. The Finance & Amenities Officer had put together a report detailing the organisation's requirements for the event, which were as follows:

- One off line marking based on a special layout to be supplied by the organisation
- Use of the whole field across the whole weekend

- Hire of kitchen and lounge area for the whole weekend
- Use of changing rooms across the whole weekend.

The Finance & Amenities Officer had advised that when this organisation has hosted this type of event previously, the council has charged back the cost of the line marking to the organisation as well as charged their normal blanket booking rate for the hire of the field. The organisation has not hired the changing rooms before and currently has a special in-season rate for the hire of the kitchen and lounge area, but this rate is only for four hours per day. The Finance & Amenities Officer had identified in her report the following costs:

- Cleaning charge to clean the four changing rooms £84
- Blanket weekend booking rate for the hire of the field £115
- Special line marking charge as quoted by council contractors based on layout provided by organisations £528.00
- Current charge for in season use of kitchen and games room £35

It was acknowledged that because a special layout is required, the robot line marker must be specifically programmed, which takes time to do and is reflected in the quoted cost. Members discussed how much the organisation should be charged for the tournament, and it was suggested that the charges should be as follows:

- Special line marking: £528.00
- Changing room hire (to cover cleaning): £84.00
- Hire of field for weekend: £115.00
- Use of kitchen and games room for whole of weekend: £50.00

Total: £777.00

Councillor Griffiths felt that the above charges were too high, bearing in mind that this was a community organisation rather than a business hosting a tournament. He wondered whether there should be one hire cost to hire the venue rather than breaking down the costs for the kitchen and changing rooms, for example. It was explained that it wasn't just the use of the facility but also the cleaning that will need to be undertaken. After a discussion it was agreed that the costs listed above should be charged to the organisation for their event.

Members felt that the breakdown of costs should be communicated to the organisation so that they understand how this figure has been constructed.

Recommendation: The council charge Future of Football FC £777.00 for their summer tournament as per the breakdown of costs above.

047/25 Partnership Working:

a) Invoice received for Christmas Lights:

Councillor Baines reported that the parish council had received an invoice from Melksham Town Council towards the Christmas lights. He reminded members that the parish council had agreed to contribute towards the lights earlier on in the year. It

was queried whether this invoice should be paid now or whether it should be paid nearer to Christmas. Members acknowledged that there was some expense prior to Christmas for the lights; however, there was still an outstanding invoice that the town council still had not made payment for. Members agreed that this invoice should not be paid at this time and not until the outstanding invoice that they owe the parish council is paid.

Recommendation: The parish council do not pay the invoice for the Christmas lights until the outstanding invoice owed to the parish council is settled.

b) Update on amount of CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) funding held by Melksham Town Council in the CIL sharing pot for joint projects:

The Clerk explained that in terms of year-end, she would like to detail how much CIL the town council holds in the 10% CIL sharing pot for joint projects under partnership working. To date, they have not been in a position to provide a figure. The Clerk was due to meet with the Locum Responsible Financial Officer from the town council on 12th June to go through the CIL then, so a figure may be available after this date to include in the year end accounts prior to their approval on 16th June.

c) Payment of Neighbourhood Plan expenses:

Held in closed session.

The Clerk explained for new members of the committee that the parish council had invoiced Melksham Town Council in January for their share of the costs towards the Melksham Neighbourhood Plan, which was c.£10,000. The town council had misunderstood certain aspects of the invoice and initially refused to pay it, but this had now been resolved and had been agreed to be paid by the town council on 31st March. Unfortunately, this invoice was still outstanding, despite this being chased by officers. The last officers heard about this matter was that the invoice was on the April payment run to be authorised; however, we were now in May, and it had still not been settled. The Clerk explained that if this was any other debtor the council would be having discussions on how to recover the debt due to the amount and the length of time it has been outstanding. It was acknowledged that there was now a new town council in place following the elections with some new members of staff. Taking all of this into account it was felt that a reminder to the town council should be put on record that the parish council wish for the payment to be made as soon as possible.

Meeting closed at 9.50pm

Signed.....
Chairman, Monday 16th June 2025