MINUTES of the Asset Management Committee of Melksham Without Parish Council held on Monday 2nd November 2026 at Melksham Without Parish Council Offices (First Floor), Melksham Community Campus, Market Place, SN12 6ES at 7:00pm

Present: Councillors John Glover (Council Chair), David Pafford (Council Vice Chair), Martin Haffenden (Committee Vice Chair), Alan Baines, John Doel and Tony Hemmings.

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

In attendance: There was four members of the public in the room, one member of the public only wished to observe the meeting. The other three members were representatives of Melksham Cricket Club and were attending to speak under public participation.

There were no members of the public attending remotely.

261/26 Welcome & Housekeeping:

Councillor Haffenden, in the absence of Councillor Franks, Chair of the Asset Management Committee, welcomed everyone to the meeting. As all those present were familiar with the meeting procedures, it was agreed that the full housekeeping information did not need to be read out. Everyone present was reminded that the meeting was being recorded and would be published on YouTube following the meeting.

262/26 Apologies:

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

263/26 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

264/26 Dispensation Requests for this Meeting

None.

265/26 To consider holding items in Closed Session due to confidential nature:

Under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, members considered whether any items should be held in confidential session.

The Clerk advised that agenda item 6d, concerning correspondence from St Barnabas Church about land leased by the parish council, and agenda item 9a, concerning the Shaw Village Hall lease, involved potential legal matters. It was agreed that these matters would be considered in closed session near to the end of the meeting.

The Clerk advised that quotes did not need to be held in closed session as long as members did not disclose the specific contractors during discussions.

Resolved: Agenda items 6d and 9a be considered in closed session due to the confidential legal matters involved.

266/26 Public Participation:

The committee agreed to suspend standing orders for a period of public participation.

Representatives from Melksham Cricket Club attended the meeting to discuss the possibility of using Bowerhill Sports Field for cricket. The Chair of the Melksham Cricket Club provided members with an overview of the club's recent growth, explaining that it currently had three adult teams playing in the Wiltshire Cricket League, a growing ladies' section of approximately 50 members and around 55–60 junior members. The representative explained that the club's growing ladies' section played both hardball and softball cricket, including an eight-a-side softball format.

Following the club's recent AGM, it had been agreed to introduce a fourth adult team for the 2027 season, which had created difficulties in securing suitable facilities. The first and second teams currently shared the main cricket ground in Melksham, while the third team used facilities at Seend, although availability was sometimes restricted due to other bookings. Arrangements had been made for the fourth team to use facilities at Biddestone Cricket Club for the forthcoming season; however, the club was keen to identify a more permanent facility within Melksham. Other locations in the surrounding area had been explored but were already being used by other clubs. The representative highlighted that cricket had historically been played at the Bowerhill Sports Field and wished to explore whether it would be possible to reintroduce the sport at this location.

A second representative from Melksham Cricket Club joined the meeting during this discussion.

Members were provided with a plan of the Bowerhill Sports Field showing the existing football pitch layout and a potential location for a cricket wicket. The Clerk explained that officers had consulted with the ground’s contractors regarding a possible location which would avoid the existing football pitches, and this information had been shared with the cricket club prior to the meeting. The representative advised that a cricket ground would require a boundary of approximately 65 yards from the wicket, as illustrated on the plan.

Discussions took place regarding the type of wicket that could be installed. The representative explained that an artificial wicket would be quicker to install and have less impact on the existing football pitches. A traditional grass cricket wicket would require several individual strips and take approximately three to four years to establish. Members raised concerns about the potential impact of a grass wicket on the football pitches, particularly given the overlap between the football and cricket seasons and the need to undertake regular pitch maintenance and renovation works. It was also highlighted that the parish council had received significant Football Foundation funding towards improving the pitches, which would need to be taken into consideration. The cricket club acknowledged these concerns and indicated that an artificial wicket would be the preferred initial option, with the possibility of considering grass wickets in the longer term.

Members were advised that the cricket league season ran for 18 weeks from the beginning of May until the end of August. Although the club would welcome a new facility sooner, arrangements were already in place for the 2027 season, with the aim of securing a facility in Melksham from 2028 onwards.

The representative estimated that a good-quality artificial wicket would cost approximately £15,000 and explained that the club would investigate potential funding opportunities through the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) and Wiltshire Cricket, including the possibility of grant funding and a contribution from the club. Installation could be undertaken relatively quickly, although the wicket would require some weeks to settle before use.

Members queried the maintenance requirements associated with introducing cricket at the Bowerhill Sports Field. The representative explained that the parish council already maintained the grass, which would serve as the cricket outfield. The artificial wicket would require its markings to be repainted approximately three or four times during the summer, potentially more frequently depending on usage. The Cricket Club may be able to undertake the marking of the cricket boundary itself, but this could obviously be looked at in the future if the council were to approve this proposal. He confirmed that the proposal was primarily intended to accommodate Saturday league fixtures rather than regular midweek use. It was highlighted that the council undertook significant football pitch renovation works during the summer as this was the closed football season, including scarifying, spiking and reseeding, which could potentially conflict with cricket fixtures. Members recognised the importance of ensuring that these works could continue if cricket was introduced at the site.

Attention was also drawn to the existing underground drainage infrastructure, including a pipe and manhole within the field, which would need to be accurately located before any proposed wicket position could be confirmed. The Clerk explained that the council was also considering the longer-term possibility of installing a 3G pitch at Bowerhill Sports Field, and any cricket proposals would need to take account of the potential future development of the site.

Members also queried whether an artificial wicket would require protection during the winter football season. The representative explained that artificial wickets were generally durable and could withstand normal use, although measures might be necessary to prevent damage.

The Clerk highlighted that the Bowerhill Sports Field was protected in perpetuity under Fields in Trust. Any proposed development would therefore need to be considered in accordance with the requirements of this designation, although it was not anticipated that providing additional sporting facilities would necessarily present an obstacle.

The potential use of the existing sports pavilion was also discussed, with the representative confirming that it would provide suitable facilities for the cricket teams to use. It was noted that use of the pavilion would be subject to a separate hire arrangement.

The meeting reconvened.

267/26 Melksham Cricket Proposal:

Following the above discussion under public participation, members indicated that they were supportive of investigating the proposal further, on the basis of an artificial wicket rather than a traditional grass square.
Resolution: The council investigate the feasibility of accommodating cricket at the Bowerhill Sports Field, on the basis of an artificial wicket, taking into consideration the existing football pitches and bookings, drainage infrastructure, maintenance requirements, safety considerations and potential future development of the site.

7.33pm the representatives were thanked for attending the meeting and subsequently left.

268/26 Annual Review of Asset:

a) **Asset Management responsibilities and priorities**:

The Clerk drew attention to the committee's responsibilities under its Terms of Reference, the Practitioners' Guide 2026/27 and the council's objectives and priorities. She explained that, as part of the Annual Governance and Accountability process, the council must be able to demonstrate that it identifies, inspects, safeguards and maintains its assets appropriately. Members were asked to keep this in mind throughout the course of the meeting and when considering the asset management item later in the meeting.

b) **Asset Register and Condition review**:

The Finance & Amenities Officer presented the Caretaker's asset inspection report for the parish. It was noted that this committee had previously reviewed the office and allotment reports at the July meeting. She reported that most assets had been rated satisfactory; except for some items relating to play areas which were to be considered in conjunction with the separate RoSPA reports under a subsequent agenda item. The Clerk suggested that play area equipment be excluded from future annual asset inspection lists, as it was already subject to separate specialist inspections undertaken by RoSPA.

Members discussed a replacement bench at Falcon Way, Bowerhill which had been vandalised around a year ago. The Clerk explained that there had been historic landownership complications which was why it wasn't replaced at the time. It was noted that a new bus shelter, with seating, was being progressed through Wiltshire Council's LHFIG (Local Highway & Footpath Improvement Group) and it was queried whether there was a need for a separate bench too. Members considered that the need for a separate bench should be reviewed after the shelter had been installed, when its precise location and seating provision were known.

The Clerk also drew attention to the condition of a council-owned timber bench at West Hill, which appeared weathered and had a protruding fixing. Members discussed whether it was still used, noting its position by a bus stop, the restricted space and the ditch behind the railings. It was considered that the bench should be removed rather than incur expenditure on a replacement without evidence of demand. Any subsequent feedback from residents could inform whether replacement seating was needed.

Resolved 1: The council defer consideration of a replacement bench at Falcon Way until the new bus shelter has been installed.

Resolved 2: Officers arrange removal and appropriate disposal of the existing bench at West Hill and review the need for replacement if requests are subsequently received.

c) **Defibrillator disposal**:

The Clerk advised that the council had previously agreed to replace the six older Lifeline VIEW defibrillators which were around ten years old and their batteries had reached the end of their serviceable lives. She highlighted the importance of ensuring that council assets were disposed of appropriately, and recorded for audit purposes, and suggested that, rather than disposing of the defibrillators, they could be offered to St John Ambulance for training purposes.

The Clerk explained that the council had previously donated expired first aid supplies to St John Ambulance, which had been grateful to receive them. Members supported the suggestion, subject to St John Ambulance being willing to accept the defibrillators.

Recommendation: To offer the six obsolete Lifeline VIEW defibrillators to St John Ambulance for training purposes and, if they were not required, to arrange for their appropriate disposal as electrical equipment.

269/26 Play Areas, MUGAs (Multi Use Games Area) & Public Open Spaces:

a) RoSPA inspection reports and associated quotations:

The Finance & Amenities Officer presented a summary of the annual RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) inspection reports, together with a schedule identifying the matters requiring attention. She explained that comments had been included against the individual findings to indicate whether they could be addressed by the Caretaker or whether quotations had been obtained for consideration by members.

Members were advised that the RoSPA reports included two risk ratings: the innate risk and the actual risk. The innate risk represented the inherent risk associated with a piece of equipment, even when it was in good condition, and therefore the lowest risk score that could reasonably be achieved for that item. The actual risk reflected the condition of the equipment at the time of inspection. It was explained that RoSPA used a risk-scoring matrix which assessed both the likelihood of an incident occurring and the potential severity of any resulting injury. Each factor was scored from 1 to 5, with the two scores multiplied to give an overall risk score ranging from 1 to 25. The resulting risk was classified as low (green), medium (amber) or high (red), according to the matrix.

It was explained that an item assessed as medium risk might already be at its lowest achievable risk rating, due to the inherent nature of the equipment, rather than its condition. Therefore, both the innate and actual risk scores needed to be considered when determining whether remedial action was required. A copy of RoSPA's risk-scoring matrix was provided to members for reference.

The Finance & Amenities Officer reported that the majority of items had been assessed as very low or low risk, although two high-risk matters and four medium-

risk matters had been identified. The two high-risk matters had already been addressed. These related to a fallen tree at Berryfield Play Area, which had been cut down but left within the play area, and the bridge at Bowerhill Sports Field, which had been physically closed off pending replacement.

The medium-risk matters related to the overhead climber at Beanacre Play Area, a broken swing seat at Whitworth Play Area, and two issues at Shaw Play Area involving worn safety surfacing and swing shackles. The Beanacre equipment was due to be replaced as part of the refurbishment project, while the Caretaker had already addressed the issue at Whitworth. Quotations had been obtained for the repairs required at Shaw. The Finance & Amenities Officer explained that quotations had been sought for matters requiring specialist attention, with alternative quotations obtained where possible.

Members reviewed the inspection findings and associated quotations as follows:

Berryfield Play Area

Members considered an issue with the entrance gate, where an insufficient gap between the gate and its post presented a potential finger-trap risk. Although RoSPA had assessed the matter as low risk, the Caretaker had expressed concern about the possible severity of an injury, particularly to a young child. The Finance & Amenities Officer explained that a minimum gap of 12mm was required between gate and post and that the issue could be addressed by resetting the gate post.

Members agreed that the gate post should be reset to eliminate the risk.

Recommendation 1: The council accept the quotation of £698 + VAT from JH Jones & Sons to reset the gate post at Berryfield Play Area to address the finger-trap risk.

Members also considered the condition of the existing wire fencing surrounding the play area. The Clerk explained that Berryfield was one of the play areas previously transferred from Wiltshire Council and that, unlike other sites, it had not undergone significant refurbishment due to the proposed route of the Wilts & Berks Canal through the area. It was noted that the council had recently identified Berryfield as a play area requiring future refurbishment. Some members questioned whether expenditure on the existing fencing was justified if more extensive improvements were likely to be undertaken; however, others highlighted the importance of maintaining a secure boundary to prevent children leaving the play area and dogs entering. Members examined the photographs and inspection findings and acknowledged that the fencing continued to serve its purpose. Nevertheless, it was considered appropriate to undertake the minor repairs identified rather than allow its condition to deteriorate further.

Recommendation 2: The council accept the quotation of £295 + VAT from JH Jones & Sons for minor fencing repairs at Berryfield Play Area.

Bowerhill Sports Field

Members considered the condition of the ball-stop fencing at the basketball post end of the half MUGA (Multi Use Games Area), where several panels and fixings required attention. It was noted that the fencing had originally been installed at the former basketball court elsewhere on the site and had subsequently been relocated

to its current position when Portal Road was constructed. The fencing was therefore considerably older than the current MUGA, having already been in use for many years before being relocated. Members also noted that young adults had been using the fencing to undertake exercises, such as leg raises, which had contributed to damage to the panels and fixings. Given the age of the fencing and the many years of service it had provided, members considered that undertaking the necessary repairs was justified.

Recommendation 3: To accept the quotation from JH Jones & Sons for repairs to the ball-stop fencing at Bowerhill Sports Field at a cost of £560 + VAT.

Hornchurch Road MUGA (Multi Use Games Area)

Members considered the removal of the existing basketball net, which had deteriorated and required attention. The Finance & Amenities Officer explained that the height of the basketball hoop meant that the Caretaker could not safely remove the net working alone, due to the risks associated with working at height and difficulty in getting a stepladder to site. It was noted that the council had previously decided not to routinely replace basketball nets at its facilities because of the maintenance and safety implications. Members agreed that the existing net should be removed.

Recommendation 4: To accept quotation of £45 + VAT from JH Jones & Sons for the removal and disposal of the basketball net at Hornchurch Road MUGA.

Members also considered a quotation of £476 + VAT to repair cracking in the access path leading to the MUGA which was a path that the parish council had installed. It was suggested that the cracking could be associated with seasonal ground movement following the particularly dry summer. Members considered that the condition might improve as the ground absorbed more moisture and that the cracking did not currently appear to present an urgent safety concern. Members agreed that the repairs should be deferred and the condition of the surfacing monitored.

Resolved: The council does not undertake repairs to the access surfacing at Hornchurch Road MUGA at this time and monitor the cracking to establish whether remedial works are necessary.

Shaw Play Area

Members considered the need for additional weed treatment to the bonded mulch safety surfacing at Shaw Play Area. The Clerk explained that the presence of trees and shaded areas encouraged weed growth and the last time the contractor went to pressure wash the safety surfacing, they were unable to as it would have pulled up the surfacing and caused damage. Members were reminded that the council had previously reviewed alternative methods of weed control but had continued to permit the use of glyphosate where appropriate, as no sufficiently effective alternative had been identified. It was noted that treatment would need to be undertaken while weather conditions remained suitable. Members agreed that the proposed works should proceed to help preserve the safety surfacing.

Recommendation 5: To accept the quotation of £120 + VAT from JH Jones & Sons for weed treatment at Shaw Play Area.

Members also considered repairs required to the junior swing safety surfacing, worn swing shackles and a deteriorating timber component on the multiplay equipment. The Finance & Amenities Officer explained that two quotations had been obtained. Quotation 8a, at £498.30 + VAT, covered all three repairs, whereas quotation 8b, at £460.44 + VAT, covered only the safety surfacing repair. She explained that the contractor who provided quotation 8b had requested further measurements and information about the other items earlier that day, but a revised quotation would not be available in time for the meeting.

The contractor had previously suggested that, as one timber component was deteriorating, others might also be affected and that replacement of the entire piece of equipment might therefore be necessary. The Clerk advised that Shaw Play Area had originally been installed in 1992. However, members noted that the need for complete replacement had not been identified in the recent RoSPA inspection report, nor did the Caretaker, who inspected the play area weekly, consider this necessary.

Members queried whether the council had previously used the contractor who provided quotation 8a. The Clerk advised that she did not believe so, but confirmed that they were an established and recognised play equipment supplier. Members considered that undertaking all three repairs together represented better value for money than commissioning the safety surfacing repair alone.

Recommendation 6: To accept the quotation of £498.30 + VAT from Kompan (quote 8a) for the safety surfacing repair, swing shackle replacement and timber repairs at Shaw Play Area.

Kestrel Court Play Area

Members considered the condition of the toddler swing seat, where the fixings had become heavily corroded. It was considered that replacing the complete swing seat would be the most practical solution. Members agreed that the replacement should proceed.

Recommendation 7: To accept the quotation of £102.50 + VAT from GB Sport & Leisure for a replacement toddler swing seat at Kestrel Court Play Area.

Beanacre Play Area

Members noted that the overhead climber had again been identified as a medium-risk item due to its reliance on a single supporting post for stability. This matter had been highlighted in previous inspection reports and continued to be monitored. It was confirmed that the equipment would be replaced as part of the forthcoming Beanacre Play Area refurbishment project, and therefore no separate remedial works were proposed under this item.

Whitworth Play Area

Members noted that a broken swing seat had been identified as a medium-risk matter in the annual inspection report. The Finance & Amenities Officer confirmed that the Caretaker had already addressed the issue, and no further action was required under this item.

b) Replacement gate at Hornchurch Road Play Area:

The Clerk reminded members that at a previous Full Council meeting, members had considered two quotations to replace the pedestrian gate at Hornchurch Road Play Area, following concerns about the gate rebounding and an incident involving a child. The proposed replacement gate would incorporate a hydraulic closing mechanism to provide a softer closing action. At the previous meeting, officers had been asked to obtain a further quotation from the contractor appointed to undertake the Beanacre Play Area refurbishment project. This had now been received, and the three quotations were as follows:

Quote 1- £2,383.37 excluding VAT
Quote 2- £2,677.50 excluding VAT
Quote 3- £2,121.11 excluding VAT

Members noted that the contractor providing the most expensive quotation had visited the site, whereas the other two contractors had quoted without a site visit. It was suggested that the lower labour costs in the quote 3 reflected the fact that the contractor would already be working at Beanacre Play Area. Members were satisfied that the quotation covered the necessary works and considered that, as the contractor had already been appointed to undertake the Beanacre Play Area refurbishment, there was no reason not to accept the cheaper quotation.

Recommendation: The council approve the quotation of £2,121.11 + VAT from HAGS (Quote 3) for replacement of the Hornchurch Road Play Area gate.

c) Beanacre Play Area refurbishment project:

The Finance & Amenities Officer reported that two of the three references requested for the appointed contractor had been received and were positive. The project consultant was arranging the contract paperwork for signature, following which an installation programme could be agreed. The Clerk advised that one reference had drawn attention to drainage difficulties beneath an in-ground trampoline at another site. Members had already noted that drainage at Beanacre would need to be looked at which would be discussed at a site meeting with the contractor. It was noted that the project budget had capacity to address this if required.

d) Correspondence from St Barnabas Church regarding alleged encroachment:

This item was considered in closed session at the end of the meeting.

Held in closed session.

The Committee considered correspondence concerning a potential boundary issue affecting land leased by the Parish Council and the associated legal implications.

Recommendation: That Full Council authorise officers to seek appropriate legal advice to establish the Council's responsibilities and the options available before further action is taken.

The detailed discussion is recorded in separate confidential supporting notes.

270/26 QEII Diamond Jubilee Sports Field & Pavilion (known informally as Bowerhill Sports Field):

a) Football Bookings:

The Finance & Amenities Officer presented a report on the current sports field bookings for the new football season. She advised that the season had commenced, with three adult teams using the facilities for home matches, two playing on Saturday afternoons and one on Sunday mornings, alongside the youth organisation's use of the junior pitches.

Bookings were generally progressing well, although a small number of matches had been cancelled on the five-a-side pitches due to their condition. The Finance & Amenities Officer also reported that there had been some instances of the youth organisation triggering the pavilion alarm. Officers had raised the matter with the organisation, which had now been addressed.

b) Impact of football activity during the closed season

The Finance & Amenities Officer drew members' attention to concerns raised by the council's grounds maintenance contractor regarding the amount of football activity taking place at Bowerhill Sports Field during the closed season, particularly during the summer months when prolonged periods of hot and dry weather had affected grass growth and pitch recovery. It was explained that the sports field continued to be used throughout the summer for football training camps, evening training sessions and other activities. Training sessions could cause more concentrated wear than matches, as drills were often undertaken repeatedly in the same areas rather than across the whole pitch. This had contributed to a reduction in grass coverage, particularly on the youth pitches closest to the pavilion, with some pitches becoming unplayable at times. One of the adult pitches had also been rested to allow it time to recover.

The Finance & Amenities Officer advised that the grounds maintenance contractor had raised concerns that the continued level of summer activity was not allowing sufficient time for the pitches to recover before the start of the new football season. Similar issues had been experienced during the previous season, particularly during the wetter winter months when the lack of grass coverage had contributed to deteriorating pitch conditions. It was noted that maintenance works, including fertilisation and spiking of the pitches, were being undertaken to assist recovery. Members acknowledged the importance of the sports field being well used by the community, whilst recognising the need to ensure that the pitches had sufficient opportunity to recover and remained playable throughout the football season.

Resolved: The council note the concerns raised by the ground contractors but take no further action at this time.

c) Latest Pitch Power assessment

It was noted that the latest PitchPower assessment had been undertaken as part of the reporting requirements associated with the Football Foundation grant. Members were advised that assessments were required twice a year and that the reports enabled the condition of individual pitches to be compared over time. Some pitches

had poor ratings which was primarily down to the use they have had during the closed season, while others had improved or fluctuated. Members noted the assessment and the continuing programme of remedial grounds maintenance.

d) Melksham Cricket Club proposal:

This was considered and discussed earlier on at the meeting under minute 267/26.

e) Separation of waste:

The Clerk reminded members of the forthcoming requirements under the Simpler Recycling Regulations, which the parish council would need to comply with by the 31st March 2027. As the council was classed as a micro-firm, it had until this date to introduce separate arrangements for food waste, dry mixed recycling and glass at the Bowerhill Sports Pavilion.

Members discussed the practicalities of introducing the new arrangements, particularly the risk of waste being incorrectly separated by pavilion hirers and the potential for additional charges if the commercial bins became contaminated. It was noted that the external commercial waste bins would be kept locked, with the cleaner responsible for transferring waste from the internal pavilion bins into the appropriate external bins, rather than hirers having direct access to them. However, concerns were raised about how responsibility for incorrectly separated waste could be attributed to individual hirers, given that the cleaner did not attend after every booking. Members considered whether a penalty should be incorporated into the pavilion hire terms but felt it would be preferable to introduce the arrangements initially, with clear signage and instructions for hirers, and review the position if contamination became a recurring problem.

The Finance & Amenities Officer had obtained quotations from the council's existing waste contractor, Grist Environmental, for the provision of three additional lockable commercial waste bins. She explained that, given the current limited use of the pavilion kitchen, smaller bins and monthly collections would be a sensible starting point, with the arrangements monitored and adjusted if necessary.

Members considered the different bin sizes and collection frequencies available, including whether the food waste bin should be emptied fortnightly to avoid potential odour and hygiene issues. However, given the relatively small amount of food waste currently generated, members agreed that monthly collections would be sufficient initially.

Recommendation: The parish council introduce separate waste collections at Bowerhill Sports Pavilion, comprising a 120-litre food waste bin, a 240-litre dry mixed recycling bin and a 120-litre glass bin, all collected monthly by Grist Environmental, at an annual cost of £270.75 excluding VAT. Appropriate internal bins, signage and instructions for hirers to be provided, with the arrangements monitored and reviewed as necessary.

f) Fuel surcharge for bin emptying

Members noted correspondence from the waste contractor advising of an increase in the fuel surcharge effective from the 9th October 2026. The change was understood

to add approximately £1 to the relevant collection charge. The revised ongoing cost was noted.

g) Cold water booster pump maintenance

The Finance & Amenities Officer advised that the existing three-year maintenance agreement for the cold water booster pump at the Bowerhill Sports Pavilion had expired. The existing local contractor, who had undertaken the maintenance for the previous three years, had provided a quotation of £415 + Materials + V.A.T per visit for a further three-year agreement, with the price fixed for the duration of the contract.

Members were happy to continue with the existing contractor.

Recommendation: The parish council renew the cold water booster pump maintenance agreement with Carter Pumps for a further three years at £415.00 + Materials + VAT per visit, which would remain fixed for the duration of the agreement.

271/26 Allotments:

a) Report on waiting list and issues raised:

The Finance & Amenities Officer reported that there was no one currently on the allotment waiting list. Four plots had become vacant following the annual rent renewal, two at Berryfield and two at Briansfield. These had not yet been advertised because of the transition between Allotment Wardens, but the new Warden would be able to assist with viewings and lettings following handover.

Members noted reports of deer entering the allotments, theft of produce, dog fouling and members of the public walking through the site where there was no public right of way. Discussion focused on an opening at the far boundary, which had previously allowed cattle to enter, and whether fencing or signage had been disturbed. Officers confirmed that signs had previously been installed to make clear that the route was not a public right of way. The Clerk and Finance & Amenities Officer were due to visit the site with the outgoing and incoming Allotment Wardens and agreed to inspect the access and fencing as part of the handover.

b) Delegated decisions made by Clerk relating to letting of plots and permissions given for greenhouses/sheds:

There were no delegated decisions to report in relation to allotment lettings or permissions for greenhouses and sheds.

c) Plot inspection dates for 2027:

Members considered the proposed allotment plot inspection dates for 2027 as included in the agenda pack and agreed the proposed programme which was as follows:

- W/C 18th January 2027
- W/C 29th March 2027
- W/C 24th May 2027
- W/C 19th July 2027
- W/C 13th September 2027

It was noted that as per the allotment inspection procedure, all tenants will be informed of the inspection dates.

Resolved: To approve the proposed allotment inspection dates for 2027 as per above.

d) Allotment inspection app:

The Clerk explained that inspection records for approximately 75 allotment plots were currently recorded using handwritten notes or photographs, which then needed to be linked manually to the allotment database being developed. Members considered that a simple app or digital form connected to the existing database could reduce duplication, improve the evidence trail and make the Warden's inspections more efficient.

Recommendation: Officers to investigate options for developing an allotment inspection app or equivalent digital process linked to the new allotment database.

272/26 Council Owned Village Halls:

a) Shaw Village Hall and playing field:

This item was held in closed session at the end of the meeting.

i. Update on lease:

The Committee received an update on the ongoing renewal of the Shaw Village Hall and Playing Field lease and considered the next steps.

Resolved: To arrange a meeting with representatives of Shaw Village Hall Management Committee to progress the lease renewal, using the Parish Council's professionally prepared draft lease as the basis for discussions. Reasonable amendments may be considered to address site-specific requirements while retaining the provisions necessary to protect the Parish Council's interests as landlord.

Further details of these discussions are recorded in separate confidential supporting notes.

ii. Correspondence regarding water leak:

The Committee considered correspondence concerning responsibility for repairs to an underground water pipe serving Shaw Village Hall.

Recommendation: That Full Council confirm that responsibility for the repairs rests with Shaw Village Hall Management Committee under the lease arrangements and that the Parish Council will not meet the cost of the works.

b) Berryfield Village Hall:

i. Damaged rooflight:

The Finance & Amenities Officer reported that a rooflight had been damaged at Berryfield Village Hall, believed to be during a hailstorm earlier on in the year. As the parish council insured the building, officers were liaising with the insurer and would obtain the necessary quotations for repair. The matter was noted pending the insurance process.

ii. Feedback on partition wall

The Clerk advised that Berryfield Village Hall Management Committee had reported ongoing difficulties with operating the folding partition wall, particularly when opening and closing it. To minimise the risk of damage, only members of the Management Committee were permitted to operate the partition, rather than hall hirers. Despite this, problems had continued, with the Management Committee having previously received grant funding from the parish council towards repairs, only for further issues to arise, resulting in additional repair costs of approximately £1,000.

Members expressed concern about the recurring problems and associated costs, particularly as the partition wall was intended to provide flexibility in the use of the hall. It was noted that the Management Committee was now limiting its use to occasions when absolutely necessary, which undermined its original purpose. The Clerk confirmed that the concerns had been passed to the building company, who had also received feedback regarding partition walls at other village halls.

Members noted the update.

273/26 Bridges:

a) Bowerhill Sports Field bridge closure:

Members noted that the bridge at Bowerhill Sports Field had been closed to users because of its condition, pending replacement. The signage and warning tape had been repeatedly removed, so the bridge had now been physically blocked at each end.

b) Progress with bridge projects:

The Clerk reported that obtaining specialist advice and quotations for the proposed bridge projects had proved difficult. Officers and Councillor Wood had previously attended a site visit with an engineer who had undertaken measurements and details of the bridges; however, despite several follow-up requests, there had been a considerable delay in receiving quotations, which, when eventually provided, did not contain the level of detail or alternative options requested. Officers also had concerns that the proposed specifications may have been unnecessarily extensive. A further site visit had therefore been arranged with another specialist bridge engineer on Friday 30th October, during which the proposed replacement bridge at Bowerhill Sports Field and the potential pedestrian bridge between Bowood View and Buckley Gardens were considered.

Bowood View to Buckley Gardens:

The Clerk explained that the proposed bridge would provide a direct pedestrian link between the two residential developments, avoiding the need for residents to walk via Semington Road to access facilities, including Berryfield Village Hall. Following the site visit on Friday 30th October, the specialist bridge engineer had advised that the project would be considerably more complex and costly than originally anticipated. There were differences in ground levels on either side of the watercourse, and if the bridge were to provide step-free access suitable for wheelchair users, mobility scooters and pushchairs, substantial groundwork would be required to create suitable approaches, together with the construction of connecting footpaths.

The engineer had advised that, before a detailed design or accurate quotation could be prepared, a topographical survey would be required to establish the ground levels and help determine the most suitable location and positioning of the bridge. The cost of this survey was estimated at approximately £1,500, but the engineer could obtain a more accurate quotation. A drone survey would also be useful to provide a clearer picture of the site and surrounding area. Vegetation would need to be cleared to enable the necessary surveys and assessments to be undertaken, with further investigation potentially required to establish ground conditions and the extent of the foundations needed.

The Clerk explained that the parish council could therefore incur several thousand pounds in preliminary survey and investigation costs before obtaining a detailed quotation or establishing whether the scheme was financially viable. Taking into account the bridge itself, accessible approaches, groundwork, surveys, vegetation clearance and connecting footpaths, the engineer had indicated that the overall project could cost in the region of £100,000, although this remained an indicative estimate subject to the findings of the surveys and detailed design.

The Clerk advised that a potential £20,000 contribution from the developer of the Buckley Gardens development had previously been discussed; however, this had not been secured and was not a condition of the planning permission. There was therefore no guarantee that the contribution would be forthcoming, potentially leaving the parish council responsible for the full cost of the project.

Members discussed whether the anticipated benefits justified such significant expenditure, particularly given the limited response to the previous consultation with Bowood View residents, which had not demonstrated substantial demand for the proposed bridge. Members noted that the previous consultation had been undertaken with Bowood View residents and had demonstrated limited interest in the proposed bridge. It was acknowledged that the consultation had not included residents of Buckley Gardens, as the development had not been built and occupied at the time, and that there could potentially be greater demand for the pedestrian link from residents of that development as the route to the Village Hall. Members considered the existing pedestrian route via Semington Road, noting that sections of the pavement were narrow and could benefit from improvements. It was suggested that improvements to the existing footpath and the provision of additional pedestrian crossing facilities could offer a more practical alternative. Members felt that opportunities to secure such improvements through future development proposals should be pursued.

Recommendation: Given the estimated £100,000 cost, the uncertainty over developer funding and the need to commit further expenditure to surveys and investigations before the feasibility and final cost could be established, the parish

council does not progress the proposed pedestrian bridge between Bowood View and Buckley Gardens at this stage. Instead, opportunities to improve pedestrian connectivity and crossing facilities along Semington Road be pursued, including checking that the identified highway improvements have been adequately captured in the Walk Wheel Cycle Trust report and requested as part of the Bellway planning application**.**

Bowerhill Sports Field:

The Clerk reported that the specialist bridge engineer who attended on Friday 30 October considered replacement of the existing bridge to be relatively straightforward. Unlike some of the earlier proposals, which involved longer bridges and new foundations, the engineer considered that the existing concrete supports could potentially be retained, allowing a replacement bridge of approximately the existing dimensions to be installed.

The engineer had advised verbally that the bridge was a relatively straightforward, largely off-the-shelf product with a potentially short lead time. Some vegetation clearance would be required, but installation could be undertaken using lifting equipment positioned on Westinghouse Way, avoiding the need for heavy machinery to enter the sports field. Installation itself could potentially be completed within a day.

Officers anticipated receiving a written quotation in time for Full Council on Monday 9 November, when members would be asked to consider the replacement bridge specification, quotations received and funding arrangements, with a view to progressing the replacement as soon as practicable.

Shurnhold Fields:

The Clerk advised that, as the specialist bridge engineer was already visiting the parish to inspect the proposed bridge projects, officers had taken the opportunity to ask him to assess the condition of the existing bridge at Shurnhold Fields.

It was noted that the bridge formed part of a public right of way and that, although Wiltshire Council had responsibilities in relation to bridges on public rights of way, the parish council also had an interest in ensuring that structures situated on its land remained safe and in a satisfactory condition. The Clerk reported that the engineer had inspected the bridge, including its concrete structure, and had been satisfied with its overall condition. He had raised no concerns and confirmed that there was no requirement for repair or replacement works at the present time. It was also noted that no concerns had been raised on the latest RoSPA report.

Members welcomed the reassurance provided by the engineer's assessment and noted that no further action was required in respect of the bridge at Shurnhold Fields.

274/26 Request to purchase council-owned land adjacent to Berryfield Play Area:

The Clerk advised that a resident had renewed a request, originally made some years previously, to purchase a small area of parish council-owned land adjoining their property at Berryfield Play Area. The resident wished to incorporate the land into their existing garden. The Clerk explained that the request had not previously been progressed, partly because the proposed disposal would primarily benefit an individual resident rather than the wider community, and officers had other priorities.

It was noted that the resident had been patient in awaiting further consideration of the matter.

Members were reminded that the land had originally been acquired from Wiltshire Council for a nominal sum of £1. The Clerk advised that the original transfer was likely to contain restrictions or financial provisions governing any subsequent disposal. It was therefore uncertain whether the parish council could sell the land or whether any proceeds would be subject to repayment or clawback arrangements in favour of Wiltshire Council.

Members discussed the potential implications of disposing of the land, particularly as incorporating it into the adjoining garden could increase the development potential of the resident's property. It was suggested that, should a sale eventually be considered, appropriate legal safeguards might be required to ensure that the parish council benefited from any subsequent increase in land value arising from future development. One suggestion was that the parish council should receive 50% of any such increase. Members also considered that any purchaser should be responsible for meeting the parish council's legal costs, as well as their own.

The Clerk explained that the council would first need to look at the original transfer documentation to establish the nature of any restrictions imposed by Wiltshire Council and whether disposal of the land was permissible. Members acknowledged that it would be premature to consider a sale price or agree to dispose of the land without first understanding the legal position.

Members agreed that officers should undertake an initial review of the original transfer documentation and report back on any restrictions or obligations affecting the land before the request was considered further.

Resolved: Officers to review the original transfer documentation for Berryfield Play Area to establish whether any restrictions or conditions imposed by Wiltshire Council would prevent or affect the proposed sale of the land.

275/26 Bus Shelters asbestos surveys:

The Clerk advised that concerns had arisen regarding the possible presence of asbestos in one of the parish council's older concrete bus shelters, following which work to prepare the shelter for repainting had been stopped as a precaution. As several other shelters were of a similar age and construction, the council had previously agreed for asbestos surveys to be undertaken to establish whether asbestos-containing materials were present.

The surveys confirmed that, of the shelters inspected, only the bus shelter at the top of Shaw Hill contained asbestos. The Finance & Amenities Officer explained that the asbestos was in a low-risk condition and that the shelter was not damaged. Provided the material remained undisturbed, it did not present a significant immediate concern. The Clerk advised that a quotation had been obtained for removing the asbestos from the shelter should members wish to consider this option; however, given the low-risk assessment and the satisfactory condition of the shelter, members did not consider that removal was necessary at present.

Members welcomed the confirmation provided by the surveys, noting that the parish council now had an accurate asbestos register rather than relying on assumptions about shelters of similar construction. This would enable officers to ensure that contractors were made aware of the presence of asbestos before undertaking any future maintenance or repair works.

Recommendation: To note the findings of the asbestos surveys and take no further action regarding the Shaw Hill bus shelter at present, with the asbestos recorded in the parish council's asbestos register and managed appropriately.

276/26 Bins:

There were no bins purchased under the Clerk's delegated powers to report.

The member of public left the meeting after the above agenda item.

277/26 Strategic Asset Management Review and Future Budget Requirements:

Resolved: That the Strategic Asset Management Review be held in closed session due to the confidential nature of certain matters to be discussed.

a) Asset management arrangements:

The Chair invited members to review the parish council's existing arrangements for managing, maintaining and safeguarding its principal assets and to identify any areas where further improvements or additional controls might be required. The Clerk provided background information and highlighted three principal areas of responsibility: Bowerhill Sports Pavilion and Sports Field, the village halls and the parish council's play areas.

Bowerhill Sports Pavilion and Sports Field

The Clerk explained that, although routine maintenance and servicing were already undertaken at Bowerhill Sports Pavilion, it would be beneficial to have a comprehensive facilities management plan setting out the various maintenance requirements and the frequency with which inspections, servicing and other tasks should be undertaken. This would include monthly, annual and longer-term requirements, providing a clear overview of the council's obligations and helping to ensure that important maintenance activities were not overlooked.

The Clerk advised that the Finance & Amenities Officer was undertaking the Clerk's qualification CiLCA (Certificate in Local Council Administration) which required the preparation of a facilities management plan as a practical exercise. It was therefore suggested that Bowerhill Sports Pavilion be used as the subject of this work, which would provide a practical document to support the council's ongoing management of the building. Members welcomed the suggestion and considered that a structured plan would strengthen oversight of the pavilion and provide a clearer record of the maintenance and servicing arrangements in place.

Resolved: The Finance & Amenities Officer develop a facilities management plan for the Bowerhill Sports Pavilion as part of her CILCA qualification, setting

out the routine maintenance, servicing and inspection requirements for the building and the frequency with which these should be undertaken.

Village Halls

Members reviewed the Council's arrangements for overseeing its village hall assets, including maintenance responsibilities and longer-term management considerations.

Further matters relating to individual management arrangements are recorded in the confidential supporting notes.

Asset Inspections, Maintenance Records and Reporting

Members reviewed the Council's arrangements for inspecting and maintaining its assets, including the recording and monitoring of defects and remedial works.

The Committee recognised the importance of maintaining a clear audit trail to demonstrate that identified maintenance and safety matters were being appropriately addressed.
Members supported continued improvements to inspection, reporting and maintenance procedures, with further operational details recorded in the confidential supporting notes.

b) Budget requirements for 2027/28:

The Clerk invited members to identify any future maintenance, replacement or capital projects which might require funding during the 2027/28 financial year. Identifying potential projects at an early stage would enable officers to obtain indicative costs and ensure that appropriate provision could be considered during the forthcoming budget-setting process.

Members discussed the importance of forward planning and the use of earmarked reserves to provide for identifiable future expenditure. The Clerk explained that, where funds remained unspent at the end of a financial year, members could consider allocating appropriate amounts to reserves for specific future projects, provided there was a clear and justifiable purpose for retaining the funds. It was acknowledged that the council should avoid accumulating substantial reserves without an identified purpose, while recognising the benefit of setting aside funding for anticipated refurbishment, replacement and other significant asset management requirements.

Berryfield Play Area

The Clerk reminded members that Berryfield Play Area had previously been identified as the next play area requiring refurbishment following Beanacre Play Area. It was suggested that members consider making financial provision towards its future refurbishment as part of the 2027/28 budget. Members discussed the potential implications of the proposed Wilts & Berks Canal, which could affect the play area should the scheme eventually proceed. The Clerk explained that, in such circumstances, those responsible for the canal project

would be liable for relocating any affected facilities. Members acknowledged the considerable uncertainty surrounding the canal proposals, noting that a planning application dating back to 2012 remained unresolved. It was therefore considered reasonable to continue planning for the refurbishment of Berryfield Play Area rather than indefinitely delaying improvements because of a project with no confirmed timescale.

Hornchurch Road – Cracked Footpath

Members also raised concerns regarding a badly cracked section of the perimeter footpath at Hornchurch Road. The Clerk explained that the affected section was part of the original footpath infrastructure rather than the area installed by the parish council. It was understood that the land remained in the ownership of the developer, Bloor Homes, and that the parish council had specifically excluded certain footpaths when taking responsibility for the play area. Members considered that the ownership and maintenance responsibilities should be clarified before any parish council expenditure was contemplated. It was suggested that the developer be approached regarding the condition of the path and responsibility for any necessary repairs.

No specific budgets or allocations were agreed at the meeting. Members noted that potential projects and future funding requirements would be considered further during the budget setting process.

Meeting closed at 9.49pm Signed…….
Chairman, Monday 9th November 2026