

MINUTES of the Finance Committee of Melksham Without Parish Council held on Monday 7th March 2022 at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Councillors. David Pafford (Vice Chair of Council), Alan Baines (Committee Vice Chair), Shona Holt and Robert Shea-Simonds

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

In attendance via Zoom: Councillors John Glover, Richard Wood, John Doel and Mark Harris (part of Meeting).

The Clerk reminded members of the committee that although Councillors Glover, Wood and Doel were members of the Finance Committee and were in attendance at the meeting via Zoom, they were not classed as physically present under council law and therefore would not be able to vote on any agenda items.

It was noted that Councillor Harris was not a member of the Finance Committee and was attending the meeting as a member of the public on behalf of Bowerhill Village Hall.

Housekeeping & Announcements: It was noted that although Councillor Glover was in attendance remotely, he was not classed as present, therefore Councillor Baines as Committee Vice-Chair took the Chair.

Councillor Baines welcomed all to the meeting.

460/21 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Wood, Glover and Doel due to illness; these reason for absence were accepted.

461/21 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Shea-Simonds declared an interest in Melksham Gardeners Society as his wife was a member of the organisation.

The Clerk, although not a voting member, declared an interest in 4Youth (formerly known as Young Melksham), as there was a grant application submitted for this organisation. Although she had recently stepped down from this organisation as a trustee, she was involved when the grant application was submitted in January and therefore would leave the room when this application was discussed. She also declared an interest as a cheque signatory for Melksham Gardeners' Society.

Although not voting members for this meeting Councillor Glover wished to declare an interest in FOF FC as his grandson works for the organisation and for Melksham Rugby Club as his son is a Director and his grandson plays for this organisation.

Councillor Wood declared an interest as Chairman of BASRAG (Berryfield & Semington Road Action Group) and Berryfield Village Hall. Councillor Holt declared an interest as a member of BASRAG and Berryfield Village Hall.

462/21 Dispensation Requests for this Meeting

None.

463/21 Public Participation

No members on Zoom wished to speak during public participation.

464/21 Grant Aid:

a) To note current Grant Aid policy

Members noted the current Grant Aid Policy. Councillor Baines drew members’ attention to Clause 1 of the policy which states that applications must be from organisations either based within the parish, or outside if it can be proved that they assist/benefit residents of Melksham Without. Members needed to be mindful of this when applications were being considered. He noted that some applications received made reference to the Melksham area, but didn’t specify the relevance to the parish directly, so members needed to be careful when considering these applications. He also reminded members that as part of the grant application submission accounts were required.

Councillor Baines highlighted that due to current legislation the council were unable to fund church buildings.

The Clerk highlighted that she would like to draw members’ attention to Clause 5 regarding applications from schools and PTAs as there was an application received from a learning provider and would highlight this when members were discussing this application.

b) To note budget provision for Grant Aid 2022/23

The committee noted the following budget provisions for 2022/23 grant aid:

Section 137 grants	£15,000
Section 144 grants (Tourism)	£ 800
Section 133 grants (Village Halls)	<u>£15,000</u>
Total	£30,800

Community project/match funding Reserve £ 765

The Clerk clarified with members that since January 2022 the council had the General Power of Competence which meant that the council does not need to list out each legal power that grants were provided under any more, this has to be done in the past as there was a maximum spend limit per elector against s137 of the Local Government Act 1972 therefore this figure needed to be identifiable so that the council could ensure that this was not breached. The officers had still identified the different legal powers against different grant headings as that was how the budget had been identified and was still a

useful way of breaking them down into sub sections. It was felt by members that these separate sections should continue to be left in this format in case the council were no longer eligible for the General Power of Competence in the future.

c) To consider allocating some funding towards Platinum Jubilee events/commemorations

Members considered whether they should award funding towards Platinum Jubilee events. The Clerk advised members that there was £765 in the Community Projects/Match Funding Reserve which could be used for such applications. Members felt that no funding should be allocated for these events due to the fact that the council have received a large number of requests for funding from organisations that undertake services in the local community, so there was a much greater need for these funds to be allocated to these organisations. Councillor Holt queried whether there had been a deadline set for these applications, the Clerk advised that there wasn't as the council were only just receiving requests for these, but the normal grant application deadline was the 31st January. Members felt that as this deadline had passed no applications should be accepted therefore the Clerk should write back to all applicants to say that the council are no longer accepting applications for Jubilee events as the grant deadline has now passed.

Recommendation: The council do not allocate funding towards Platinum Jubilee events/commemorations as the deadline for grant applications has closed.

d) To consider Grant Aid applications for 2022/23

Councillor Baines reported that the council had received 47 applications for grant aid with requests totalling to £51,935.00.

Recommendation 1: The Council reserve amounts to the following organisation pending accounts:

35. Shaw and Whitley Connect: If satisfactory accounts are received the council to award this organisation £250.00.

Recommendation 2: The Council do not award Grants to the following organisations for the following reasons:

11. Girl Guiding UK: It was noted that the parish council awarded this organisation grant funding for the same trip in the 2020/21 financial year. It was understood that due to covid this trip had been postponed with it being rescheduled for this year.

Members considered whether more funding should be awarded to this organisation for the same trip, taking into consideration that the money was awarded to them two years ago and acknowledging that costs may have gone up during this time. It was also noted that accounts were not provided with this application which seemed to be an ongoing issue with this organisation. It was taken into account that this was a stipulation in the grant aid policy, so these should have been received by now. Members felt that due to the fact that accounts had not been submitted which was clearly stated in the grant aid policy, no grant award should be given.

12. FOF FC: While members were delighted to see that FOF FC were doing well and giving many opportunities to so many young children, this was a commercial organisation who were in a position to make money through the various services that they provide. Members felt that the council already provide and maintain the facilities that this organisation use and have spent money improving the pitches while this organisation has been able to undertake their activities on the field.

The Clerk advised members that she understood that FOF FC were the team that played the matches which was more of a community strand of the organisation, the same as an adult league team, whereas the training sessions and large events was the commercial side of the business. She explained that what she was unclear about was whether the money for the goal posts, which has been applied for in this application, was also going to be used when undertaking training sessions which would be the commercial side of the organisation. It was also highlighted that when an adult pub team need to purchase new equipment this would come out of the subs that they receive from the players on match days, not grant funding from the parish council. Members felt that there was a very blurred distinction between the football club and the organisation, which was able to obtain funding through chargeable events.

It was also noted that no accounts had been submitted with this application which was the same issue as last year. The Finance & Amenities Officer advised members that when FOF FC submitted their application they explained that their accounts were not available. Whilst appreciating this, member felt that they have had adequate time to submit them and the application clearly states that accounts are expected, and taking into consideration that this was the same issue as last year (albeit their first year), no grant should be awarded to this organisation.

25. Wiltshire Citizens Advice: Members did not wish to award a grant to this organisation due to the large amount of funds available in their accounts.

26. Wiltshire Search and Rescue: Members were not minded to support this application due to the fact that there were very few areas that appear to be in the parish of Melksham Without that have been highlighted as requiring this organisation's assistance in the last couple of years.

27. Carer Support Wiltshire: Due to the large amount of funds available in the accounts members did not feel that it was appropriate to award a grant to this organisation.

31. Melksham Sixty Plus Club: Members could not identify within the grant application how this organisation assists residents of the parish; therefore, this is not in line with Clause 1 of the grant aid policy which states that 'organisations must prove that they assist residents living in the parish.' As this application does not meet the grant aid criteria, no grant should be awarded to this organisation.

33. Proud Melksham: Members acknowledged that this was an event that was being held in the town with a venue that was already being provided free of charge, it was felt that this event may attract many people attending from different parishes around the area and was deemed not appropriate for the council to provide finances for the entertainer.

Whilst the parish council support this cause, members felt that it wasn't appropriate for the council to subsidise the entertainment for this event, therefore no grant should be awarded. The council wish to advise this organisation that if they were minded to hold this event in the parish in the future, their application would be considered.

34. Friends of Shurnhold Fields: Members felt that this application was not appropriate due to the fact that Shurnhold Fields was funded jointly between the Parish Council and Melksham Town Council on a 50% split. As this application was requesting funding for the whole amount it was felt that this application should be rejected and either needed to be presented to the Shurnhold Fields working group for consideration or other sources of grant funding needed to be obtained.

Members felt that Shurnhold Fields needed to be set up in the same way as village halls and other community groups, so that they were self-sufficient and only come to the two councils for funding when it cannot be obtained from other means. The council therefore do not award any grant funding to Shurnhold Fields.

Recommendation 3: The Council award grants to the following organisations

19.33pm The Clerk left the meeting while the application for 4Youth was being discussed.

	ORGANISATION	Awarding in 2022/23
1	Bowerhill Village Hall Trust	£5,000
2	Shaw Hill Playing Field and Village Hall	£7,000
3	Berryfield Village Hall	£500
4	Whitley Reading Rooms	£1,700
SECTION 133 GRANTS (HALLS) total		£14,200
SECTION 137 GRANTS		
5	Bowerhill Residents Action Group (BRAG)	£450
6	Berryfield & Semington Rd Action Group (BASRAG)	£500
7	Community Action Whitley Shaw (CAWS)	£500
Action Groups Total		£1,450
8	1st Bowerhill Scout Group	£250
9	4Youth (South West) - formerly Young Melksham	£2,800

10	2385 (Melksham) Squadron ATC	£350
Youth Total		£3,400
13	Group Five	£400
14	Melksham PHAB Club	£250
15	Melksham Read Easy	£250
16	Wiltshire Mind	£300
17	Wiltshire Sight	£350
18	Wiltshire Air Ambulance	£500
19	HELP Counselling Services	£200
20	Life Education Centres Ltd Wiltshire	£300
21	Splitz Support Service	£500
22	Melksham Community Money Advice	£200
23	Age UK Wiltshire	£200
24	Stepping Stones.	£200
28	Alzheimer's Support	£200
29	Age Friendly Melksham CIC	£200
Support Groups Total		£4,050
30	Melksham Food & River Festival	£200
32	Shaw & Whitley Community Hub Ltd	£250
Community Total		£450
35	Shaw & Whitley Connect	£250- Reserved pending accounts
Community Info Total		£250
36	TransWilts CIC	£2,000
Transport Total		£2,000
37	AFC Melksham (Disabled)	£300
38	Melksham Free Dining	£100
39	Melksham Gardeners' Society	£200
40	Melksham Amateur Swimming Club	£250
41	Shaw & Whitley Friendship Club	£400
42	Shaw & Whitley Garden Club	£150
43	Melksham Cricket Club	£200
44	Melksham WI	£100

45	Wiltshire Youth Canoe Club (WYCC)	£500
46	Melksham Rugby Club	£300
Clubs Total		£2,500
Section 137 GRANTS Total		£14,100
SECTION 144 GRANTS (TOURISM)		
47	Melksham Tourist Information Centre	£600
SECTION 144 GRANTS (TOURISM)		£600
Grand Total		£28,900

The Clerk drew member's attention, for due diligence, to the fact that Berryfield Village Hall was due to be demolished in the Autumn of this year, once the new village hall was built and queried whether members wished to suggest in the grant award letter that funds left over from the grant should be transferred to the new Berryfield Village Hall. Members agreed that this should be included in the letter to Berryfield Village Hall.

The Clerk drew member's attention to Clause 5 of the grant aid policy whilst members were discussing the grant application submitted from the Life Education Centre. The Clerk explained that parish council's do not have powers to act, or to provide funding, for things that are already provided for under statutory legislation or funding, therefore the parish council cannot legally provide a grant for something that is in the school curriculum. This had been clarified before for this organisation and a grant given in the past as considered not in the curriculum. The Clause in the Grant policy was worded differently and stated that grants could only be considered from schools or PTAs for non-educational purposes; but this organisation was neither. It was noted that this application was for activities educating children on health and wellbeing, therefore a grant can be awarded.

The Clerk explained that the Wiltshire Youth Canoe Club had only spotted that the parish council were open for grant applications through social media and it was their first time applying. Members wished to suggest to the Wiltshire Youth Canoe Club in their grant award letter that they could apply for additional grant funding from Melksham Town Council and the Area Board.

e) To consider Platinum Jubilee funding applications

It was noted that there had been one application received for Platinum Jubilee funding from Shaw Village Hall for a flag pole. As discussed under agenda item 5c members did not wish to allocate any additional grant funding towards the Jubilee and as this application was received after the grant aid deadline of 31st January, this application was therefore rejected.

Recommendation: To not award Shaw Village Hall any funding towards a flag pole for the Platinum Jubilee event due to this application being received after the council's grant aid deadline of 31st January,

465/21 Audit:

a) To receive verbal update following 2nd Internal Audit visit (24th Feb) for 2021/22

The Clerk reported that the 2nd internal audit for year-end had recently been undertaken. This was due to the auditor wishing to get as much of the audit done as possible before year end in case of any other Covid restrictions being imposed. The Clerk explained that in the last financial year, audits had to be done remotely due to the restrictions in place at the time which was a lot more time consuming with officers scanning and emailing the required records.

The Clerk advised that one of the things highlighted in the audit was that in accordance with the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 the council must publish the Chairman's allowance amount, which has now been published on the website.

Secondly, the council need to make sure that they include an up-to-date work in progress value on the asset register for the new Berryfield Village Hall. The Clerk advised that the third valuation for the hall was scheduled for the 30th March, so this was perfect timing for year end.

The Clerk explained that she had asked for some advice from the auditor with regards to the council claiming back its VAT for the Village Hall, as the management committee was not currently in place. She explained that the council was still allowed to do this as VAT was only attributable if the council made the village hall a commercial venue instead of leasing it to a management committee on a peppercorn rent. She explained that even if no one came forward for the new management committee the councillors could become trustees, as long as it was clearly identified that it was a different organisation.

The Clerk advised that the auditor was due to look over the final figures once the council's year end closedown was completed and would then submit his final report.

b) To appoint Internal Auditor for 2022/23

The Clerk explained that when the council was looking to appoint an auditor for the current financial year it was queried whether the council should change from time to time so that there was a fresh pair of eyes undertaking the work. She advised that due to the council already being in the financial year it was felt at the time that the council should continue with the current auditor and consider changing for the 2022/23 financial year. Officers have obtained quotes for three auditors including the council's current one.

The Clerk advised that as per the JPAG (Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance) guide there was no requirement for the council to rotate auditors, but this should be reviewed every year with regard to personal independence, financial independence and professional independence. Councillor Baines highlighted that the council needed to make sure that any firm appointed was firstly a suitable firm to be considered and secondly independent to the council and parish. The Council should also ensure that any auditor is competent.

Members reviewed the following quotations received:

Quotation A: £360.00 plus VAT (for estimated 6 hours at £60 per hour + 0.45p per mile)

Quotation B: £650.00 per visit plus VAT (no mileage- £325 per visit)

Quotation C: £920.00 per visit plus VAT (no mileage- £460 per visit)- For the first year and then would reduce down to £690 plus VAT any subsequent years.

Members discussed each quotation; it was acknowledged that quotation A was located some way away from the council and would be charging mileage on top of their fees for two visits. It was considered that the mileage alone at 0.45p per mile would be a considerable cost to the parish council on top of the audit fees.

It was highlighted that quotation B was the current internal auditor who do not charge mileage. It was noted that the parish council have received a good service from the auditors. It was also noted that the current auditors do rotate the person undertaking the audit so that there was a fresh pair of eyes.

Members noted that Quotation C was a local company and the fees were much higher in the first year than any subsequent year. It was noted that this was considerably more than the current auditors. Councillor Baines also had some concerns with regards to the independence as the company director lives in the parish of Melksham Without, which may slightly compromise their independence.

Members were reassured that different auditors come and undertake the audits and felt that if the council were under no legal obligation to change the current auditors, then the current auditors should be appointed for the 2022/23 financial year. This should of course be reviewed each year.

Recommendation: The Council appoint IAC Audit and Consultancy as their internal auditor for the 2022/23 financial year.

c) To note year end closure on accounting software to take place 6th May

Members noted that the year-end closedown was due to take place on 6th May.

466/21 Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS): To note confirmation that the parish council is an eligible body under the FSCS rules

Members noted that the parish council was an eligible body under the FSCS rules as a small local authority and reviewed the “small print” on the bank statements with the FSCS rules.

Meeting closed at 22.03pm

Signed.....
Chairman, Monday 14 March 2022