

MINUTES of the IT Working Party of Melksham Without Parish Council held on Monday, 7th February 2022 at 8.04pm.

THE PUBLIC WERE WELCOME TO ATTEND THE FACE-TO-FACE MEETING, BUT WERE ENCOURAGED TO PARTICIPATE VIA ZOOM, DUE TO LIMITED SPACE AVAILABLE IN THE COUNCIL'S MEETING SPACE TO COMPLY WITH THE COUNCIL'S RISK ASSESSMENT RELATING TO COVID.

Present: Councillors John Glover (Chair of Council), David Pafford (Vice Chair of Council), Shona Holt, Stefano Patacchiola (Chair of Working Party), and Mark Harris.

Officers: Teresa Strange, Clerk, Lorraine McRandle, Parish Officer, and Marianne Rossi, Finance & Amenities Officer (Via Zoom)

Also present: Clive Merritt, Avon IT (IT contractor)

413/21 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Chivers who was ill.

414/21 To receive Declarations of Interest

During the meeting Councillor Patacchiola declared that his company were a Jabra agent, although was only involved in offering specialist advice at this stage.

415/21 Dispensation requests

There were no dispensation requests.

416/21 Public Participation

There were no members of the public present.

417/21 Website and online presence

a) To consider the NALC (National Association of Local Councils) guidance on website accessibility and review where the council is with the website

Members reviewed the latest NALC guidance on website accessibility (Oct 21). It was explained that officers had used a website accessibility tool to review how accessible the council's website was and what improvements needed to be made; and had done this again in the last few days with the tool recommended by NALC. Members noted that there were a few minor things identified that would need to be improved on the website, such as the colour contrast between text and background colour and captioning images. It was noted that the website was now 10

years old and could do with a bit of a refresh. The Clerk suggested that the photos needed updating on the website as they were now out of date. Members noted as per the Clerk's report that officers did need some assistance from their IT contractor when setting up new pages on the website or adding new councillor photos, but this was done in a timely manner. Clive, the parish councils IT contractor advised that the current system was an older type of system which could be upgraded to make it easier if the council wished and as it was a database would be easy to transfer all of the current website information across.

Members discussed whether a new system was required. Councillor Patacchiola advised that the first question that needed to be asked was what the council wished for the website to do which it currently did not and what the purpose was, this would then aid the decision on whether a new system was required. He explained that some websites were for people to find out about the council and access the latest documents, log issues and give feedback whereas some were for information and announcements. He wondered whether when the website was initially set up, there was a list of what the council intended it to do, so that members could compare against this list to ascertain whether the council had achieved this.

The Clerk explained that the website was required for document holding and has evolved over time. She advised that under the Transparency Act the council had to have a website and this also helped officers with things such as agenda notices as by the law it had to be displayed in a conspicuous place and at least three clear days before a meeting; and publishing on the website was considered adequate for this (it was noted that agendas were also published on physical noticeboards but not during the initial covid lockdown).

Councillor Glover felt that the council needed to look at what the council was unable to and analyse it against what the council was required to do by law. He felt that anything that was upgraded needed to be justified as there would be a cost implication to the council for this.

The Clerk explained that officers were struggling with uploading a public version of agenda packs onto the website. It was explained that most of the time this was due to the number of documents included in the agenda pack which made it too big. This was particularly difficult when there were joint projects with people outside of the organisation, due to the size these documents they were unable to be emailed across, so a solution for this would need to be sought. It was explained that adding links to the agenda and sending this to people outside of the organisation didn't work either because they don't have access to the council's shared drive.

Clive explained that a public area in One Drive which was part of Microsoft Office 365 could be created to resolve this issue. He explained that he has had discussions with officers regarding this, but due to covid

hasn't been able to get this fully implemented. He advised that he would need to have a look at the permissions to ensure that the public could access a dedicated area on Sharepoint, this would then allow officers to upload an agenda with links for members of the public to click into to access non confidential agenda items.

As discussed during agenda item 3a it was felt that the website as it is now, although 10 years old was largely compliant to the requirements, however an area of improvement to focus on was document management on the website. It was acknowledged that the council needed to find the most cost-effective way of doing this and felt the best way forward was to use One Drive, which was a resource that was already being paid for through Office 365.

The Clerk queried with members whether it would be a good idea to refresh the photos on the website and during this process ensure that the text describing the image was uploaded so that they were accessible. Members felt that this would be a good idea to do this process especially as the photos on the website were old and captioning images to make them more accessible could be tied into this.

Councillor Patacchiola suggested that the council held an issues and improvement log so that any of these issues could be noted down and prioritised depending on the priority. The Clerk wondered whether it would be more beneficial to have an essential and desirable list this way the highest priority could be determined.

It was felt by members that a log should be created detailing each improvement to the website required, why it needed to be done, with a priority rating indicating whether it was a mandatory requirement or desirable and details of the cost implications.

Recommendation 1: As the website is largely compliant to the requirements no major changes should be made, however document management should be prioritised. The best way forward was to implement this by using One Drive which was already included in the Microsoft Office 365 subscription to allow people outside of the organisation to access documents such as agenda papers.

Recommendation 2: The council should create a log with a description of each improvement required and the reasons why it needed to be done, with the priority rate as mandatory or desirable and include a column indicating the cost implications.

b) To consider a new page editor for the council website to enable better page formatting

The Clerk explained that officers were still having trouble when copying and pasting things onto the website. This happens from both Facebook and websites such as Wiltshire Council. Although when it is pasted into

the editor it all lines up, once it's posted on the website there seems to be a formatting issue. Officers have been unable to find out why this happens and how to resolve the issue. Clive explained that some websites may have different coding to the council's page editor as it is now an old version this is why this may occur.

It was felt that the council should investigate updating their current page editor to see if this resolves this issue, if not ask Clive to investigate other suitable solutions.

Recommendation: The council investigate whether the updated version of the current page editor resolves the formatting issues with copying and pasting onto the website and if not ask the IT Contractor to recommend other suitable alternatives.

c) To consider the use of a gov.uk domain

Councillor Patacchiola explained that using a gov.uk domain was something that he had raised. He explained that there were pros to the council having this kind of domain, the first being that it was much harder for an unauthorised person to get hold of and take over, registration and ownership is closely managed by a government organisation and secondly it conveys a certain authenticity about any emails and links on the website. He also explained that the council didn't currently use encrypted or signed emails and suggested that the council looked into doing this which allows people to have some confirmation that the email has genuinely come from the council. He explained that the costs of this domain were minimal, at around £30 per year for the registration.

It was noted that this would be used for both the website and emails and the old domain would still continue to work should people still send emails to the old address.

The Clerk explained that she had asked other councils who were using this domain and the feedback she had received was that it made the council look more professional and secure. Members discussed what the new domain name could be, it was felt that it should be melkshamwithout.gov.uk which was similar to the current domain. Councillor Holt suggested that this could be implemented once the council have moved into their new office accommodation in Autumn, so that there was only a change of contact details once. Councillor Patacchiola suggested that the prep should be arranged beforehand so that it was all set up ready for when the council wished to change over; as there was quite a lot of paperwork involved.

Recommendation: The council move to a gov.uk domain with the name being melkshamwithout.gov.uk

d) To note new Neighbourhood Plan website in pipeline

Members noted that there was a new Neighbourhood Plan website in the pipeline. The Clerk explained that this was being considered by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group meeting in a couple of days. They are considering a proposal from the current planning consultants for the Neighbourhood Plan working group, Place Studio. She explained that they had created a website for Calne's Neighbourhood Plan which was perfect for the Melksham Plan as at the same review stage and Place would be able to upload the documents to the website which would cut out the officer time involved as well as avoiding potential version control issues.

It was noted that the cost of this was £2,750 with £1,000 coming from Locality grant funding for the Melksham NHP with the remaining £1,750 being shared between the parish council and Melksham Town council. It was noted that the parish council's share would be 30% of this cost.

The Clerk explained that other incumbent suppliers of websites to the parish council and the NHP group had been contacted and were happy with the planned solution in the pipeline being a bolt on to the planning consultancy package and had utilised them to undertake a sensibility check on the proposal.

418/21 Internal Systems

a) To review the current 'phone system and review alternative options for a more cost-effective system

The Clerk explained that the parish council had previously entered into a new phone contract, however after discovering that there were more cost-effective options available pulled out. The council were now on a rolling contract with their existing supplier, however wished to look at a new system ready for the new office accommodation. It was noted that the parish council do not own their current handsets, so these would need to go back to the supplier once the council purchased a new system. The Clerk explained that any new phone system would need to have a way of diverting to officers' phones in case homeworking was implemented again and also the ability for officers to ring out using the council's number if at home so that they aren't giving out their personal number. This would also be beneficial for the out of hours number as well, as currently it was directed to an officer's phone so that officers don't have to keep an eye on two phones, but when they phone someone back it gives out their personal phone numbers.

Councillor Patacchiola confirmed that most modern-day cloud-based phone systems would have the ability to do all the requirements that the Clerk has indicated. He advised that as the council already had many products with MS Office 365 and the MS Team's product has a 'phone

system which can work with desk 'phones, an app on a mobile 'phone and through the computer. He explained that there were, however, alternative 'phone systems around, should the council wish to investigate these further for a comparison.

It was also discussed whether the council could utilise MS Teams more as it was already included in the MS Office 365 subscription. It was noted that the council were currently paying around £14.99 per month for the Zoom meeting subscription. Members felt that although it would be much more cost effective to use MS Teams for meetings, Zoom was more user friendly currently. Councillor Patacchiola explained that Zoom was a much more developed video conferencing product when the pandemic started, however Teams was slowly catching up, but agreed that Zoom was much more user friendly. He suggested that there was no reason in the future if the council felt that Teams was much better the council could move over to using Teams for meetings.

The Working Party felt that as long as the new 'phone system met the council's basic needs, they didn't need a top of the range system. It was felt that the most cost-effective option would be to go with the Microsoft option as it met all of the council's requirements. The Clerk explained that following discussions with officers it was felt that handsets would be the preferred option as the volume of calls wasn't enough to warrant the use of a headset all day, however would like the option of a headset in case of an emergency response situation where officers may be taking large volume of calls.

It was queried whether this system would work through the Campus system. Councillor Patacchiola confirmed that the Campus was providing two ISDN lines from Open Reach infrastructure into the office and anything that was run off of this was up to the council but would be compatible.

Clive queried whether there were any update regards to the internet speed and bandwidth at the campus. He explained that in previous discussions with the campus team this was queried and they were going to get back to the council on this. It was confirmed that there had been no update regarding this, but the council would follow this up with the campus team.

Recommendation: Officers to investigate the Microsoft Office cloud-based 'phone systems detailing all of its features, to include handsets for the office and bring back the costs associated to the Full Council.

b) To consider AV requirements for the interim basis and office move to the Campus

The Clerk explained that with the current meeting set up it was sometimes hard for people listening on Zoom or the subsequent YouTube recording to hear, especially the people who were furthest away from the laptop microphone. She queried with members whether they felt that this was

adequate at present as this was only going to be for a short time as the council were moving into the campus shortly, or whether something for the interim should be looked at.

Councillor Harris queried whether the council were going to use Zoom once the meetings moved to the campus. The Clerk confirmed that the council had already resolved to carry on uploading the meetings to their YouTube channel. She advised that any meeting only stays up on YouTube until the minutes are approved and then taken down once the minutes have been uploaded on the council website. She advised that in terms of Zoom she felt that it was still a good idea especially for meetings where there are plans/images/spreadsheets on the screen so that people at home are able to clearly see them. She explained that when she had observed the other councils' meetings on YouTube, she couldn't see the plans that they were discussing on the screen.

Councillor Glover felt that the council didn't need to do anything currently unless it was going to also be the permanent option for the Campus as well. Councillor Harris felt that there needed to be a microphone in the middle of the table which would help people who are listening on Zoom and YouTube hear what everyone was saying and explained that a microphone wouldn't be too expensive. He went on to explain that in previous meetings there have been a few instances where members of the public listening on Zoom had been unable to hear guest speakers, but if the council had a stand-alone microphone this would resolve this issue and could be taken to the campus.

Councillor Patacchiola explained that he had been in discussions with the Clerk with regards to budgeted figures for the new system in the campus, but did not base this on any specific system in particular. He explained that there was one product made by Jabra which was an all-in-one solution with a speaker bar, built in with it was eight microphones which are known as an array and can easily pick up individual people speaking around the room. At the top of the bar, it has three cameras which blend into one view. This was currently around £700 and can come with a table stand at an additional cost of £40- £50. He wondered whether members felt that a demo of this system would be beneficial so that they were able to see how it worked. If the council wished to go ahead with this system it is something that could be implemented right away and then taken with the council to the Campus. He explained however, that this may be more than the council had envisioned so wished for the other members thoughts. He advised that there were other options such as what Councillor Harris suggested with a stand-alone microphone which would be much better than the laptop built in microphones.

In comparison Councillor Patacchiola also explained that he had attended a recent meeting at the Town Hall who also had a microphone array which was made by Shure and was around £2,700 just for the microphone. It was agreed that this was a professional grade microphone and was not something the parish council required.

The Clerk queried with members what system they envisioned, was it to be fixed to the ceiling in the campus? and what do the council want to do about meetings around the parish such as when there are large planning applications and the council need to hold a meeting in a bigger venue? She queried whether members wished for a fixed system which stays in the campus meeting room and a portable microphone which can be taken to offsite meetings?

It was queried whether the Jabra product was portable or whether it had to be fixed to one room. Councillor Patacchiola advised that it comes with a table stand so can be moved around, however like with any device like this it works best once the room is set up. It's designed to sit underneath the screen at one end and be a static device and felt that moving it around several times would increase the risk of it becoming damaged. He explained that there were other devices that were built to be portable, but they tend to be for a room of around eight people not fifty.

The Clerk explained that at one of the bypass meetings there was around seventy people in the room and wondered whether if a microphone and camera system wasn't going to pick up everyone in the room there would be no point in investing in one. Members felt that for offsite meetings a stand-alone microphone without a camera would be beneficial.

In terms of the AV equipment for the campus, Councillor Patacchiola asked members whether they would like him to arrange a demo with some suitable options. The Clerk advised that Melksham Town Council had also offered for the parish council to go and have a look at their AV equipment if they wished to do so.

Councillor Patacchiola wished to highlighted that the council needed to consider the bandwidth requirements for the internet connection at the Campus, especially if the council was going to stream meetings. He advised that currently at the pavilion it was a standard home use style ADSL (Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line) and was unsure whether this service would be available at the Campus location. He suggested that the council would need to discuss with the Campus team what was available from them if the council were unable to obtain a suitable bandwidth source themselves. It was highlighted that IT provision was not included in the Campus office accommodation lease other than space in their comms room, therefore it was down to the parish council to make their own arrangements. This was currently difficult as the council did not yet know what services would be available in the location.

The Clerk queried what AV equipment members felt would be suitable for the new Berryfield Village Hall as although she didn't need to know specifics at this stage, as the village hall was in the process of being built, she needed to know now what infrastructure was required. The Clerk queried whether members wished for something like Bowerhill Village Hall where there was a projector screen and a place where a laptop could be plugged in. Councillor Harris explained that Bowerhill Village Hall had a projector and two amplified

speakers, all of the cabling went up into the roof void with a comms unit coming down to a socket on the wall which had various connectors.

Members agreed that there needed to be AV facilities in the village hall and felt that the infrastructure needed to be looked at as soon as possible. It was felt that Councillor Patacchiola with the Clerk should have a look at the suitable options.

Recommendation: The council to set up a demo for some suitable AV equipment options for the campus meeting room.

Recommendation 2: To discuss with the campus team what bandwidth services would be available in case the council are unable to obtain a suitable bandwidth source themselves.

c) To consider reducing paper and how to get the best out of Office 365

Councillor Patacchiola advised that if he didn't have his own device where he could look at the document and write on, he would also struggle without a paper version. He felt that this may have to be something that the council have to accept that not all documents can be viewed electronically, especially working documents, therefore there would be some paper usage. There are some devices around which do have the ability for people to mark-up documents, which could be considered.

The Clerk suggested that maybe some documents that can be looked up online as a public version such as design and access statements for planning could just be looked at electronically instead of being printed out. Councillor Glover agreed that documents such as design and access statements where a link would be sufficient is fine to just be sent as a link, but he would still like documents where the council had to make a decision on something as he likes to note down comments so that he can discuss it at the meeting.

After a detailed discussion members felt that reference documents should no longer be printed out and a link to the document should be sent to councillors instead.

Recommendation 1: The council do not print out reference documents anymore and instead provide a link to these documents.

d) To consider Office 365 training options for Councillors and Staff

The Clerk explained that councillors were at different stages with regards to using Office 365 and wondered whether it would be beneficial to arrange some kind of training. Councillor Patacchiola advised that it would be more manageable to do the training in subject areas in different sessions rather than a vast range of topics in one session where people may not take it all in. It was felt that the best way forward may be to regularly send around a "top tip" on how to do something each.

Councillor Glover highlighted that people are set up differently at home. The Clerk advised that councillors have a different version of Office 365 than the officers. It was explained that the councillors had the web-based version of Office 365 which was the cheaper version and was a recent council decision whereas officers had the desktop version.

Members felt that it would be beneficial to arrange individual sessions with Clive so these sessions can be tailored to councillor's individual requirements.

Recommendation: To arrange individual training sessions with Clive, based on councillor's individual requirements.

e) To review back-up systems

It was explained that the parish council have Avast as an additional back-up system which comes with the council's cyber security insurance. It was noted that the council back up everything to the cloud via the M drive, however if a virus did manage to get in this could affect the cloud back up, therefore it was wise to have another back up arrangement in place to ensure that key documents were protected. Unfortunately, the Avast backup has a limit which the council has now reached. The Clerk explained that not everything needed to be backed up on the Avast security, such as minutes and agendas which were public documents published on the council website, so these could be taken out. Clive advised that Avast was more for ransomware and if this did manage to get into the council's servers this could corrupt the documents on the server which may update the Office 365 versions as well. This type of security ensures that it keeps versions of the original document so that it can be recovered should it become corrupt. He explained that there were a few options, the council could pay for additional storage, go through all of the documents and take out the ones that don't require this level of security or a local back up could be looked such as a hard drive.

It was felt that the council should look at what was contained in the Avast back up and restructure anything that does not require that level of security such as agendas and minutes. If this doesn't reduce the limit to a significant level the council will need to have a look at other options.

Recommendation: Officers to look through the Avast security back up to determine what files do not need this level of security to see if this reduces the amount of back up storage.

f) To consider options for an Asset Management Database

The Clerk explained that the asset register was currently on a spreadsheet, but due to the parish council having so many assets it was now becoming much more difficult to maintain. She advised that the council had previously resolved to purchase the Rialtas asset register which would be an add on to the current finance system, however upon having a demo to see how it

worked it didn't seem to do everything that the council required it to do, therefore has not been purchased.

The Clerk explained that the council not only listed an asset on the register, but used it to ensure that the council had adequate insurance cover. Each year the council have to uplift the insurance value by the index linked %, but it appears that on the Rialtas software an officer would have to do this for each individual item. It was noted that on the spreadsheet officers were able to do this easily and did not have to go into each individual item. The Clerk explained that officers had to include the purchase price of an asset on the registers but this may be different to the insurance, for example the Bowerhill Sports Pavilion was purchased for £1 as a community asset transfer, but the insurance value was now around £1 million.

It was explained that a new system would need to have the ability to map each item so that it was easy to find its location. Currently the council was relying on officers and councillors' historic knowledge of where some items were, so it would be of benefit to staff if each item could be photographed and pinpointed on a map. It was explained that it would also need to allow for officers to be able to log any repairs and the condition of each item so that there was a background history and also note whether the item has asbestos. Officers also needed to be able to sort assets into area so that when the Caretaker did his annual check it would be sorted in each area.

It was noted that Clive may be able to create a database for the asset register which would be tailored to the councils needed. There was also Pear Technology who had a bespoke asset register system which could be investigated and also an app which was due to come on scene shortly through Cloudy IT which uses Office 365.

It was queried whether if the parish council was to go for a bespoke type of system who would be able to make the necessary changes would it be the council or the provider. It was also noted that a bespoke package may not be as flexible. The Clerk advised that this would need to be investigated further.

The Clerk explained that the allotment register was also on a spreadsheet and wondered whether it would be of benefit to have a database type of system which logged the history of the plot. Members felt that the plot as an asset could go onto some kind of database such as Access so that the history of the plot could be kept, but the tenants should be kept on the current spreadsheet as they can change over time.

Recommendation 1: Officers to clearly draw up what the council required an asset register to do and investigate bespoke asset management software further to ascertain whether this would be suitable for the council's needs.

Recommendation 2: The Council create a database for allotment plots so that the history on plot inspections and conditions can be created.

419/21 Policy and Compliance

a) To consider adopting an IT Policy

Members considered whether an IT policy would be beneficial to the council. It was felt that now that officers and councillors have been provided with council owned equipment an IT Policy should be put into place to set out how these items should be used. It was felt that as this was a policy tailored around members within the organisation, this should stay as an internal document.

It was noted that Councillor Patacchiola had a draft IT policy which he had been put together with the parish council in mind. It was felt that this was a policy that could be emailed around to members so that they can make their comments and bring back to the council.

Recommendation: The council adopt an IT Policy and review and consider the draft Policy over email once available.

b) To review the following policies:

i) Email contact privacy notice

The Clerk explained that both the email contact privacy notice and the Councillor Privacy notice were detailed in the Privacy notice for staff, councillors and role holders as per the recommendations from the Data Audit which suggested that the council should have just one privacy notice which included all of these aspects. She explained that this privacy notice along with the Councillor notice had been picked up by mistake and should have been archived.

ii) Councillor Privacy notice

As detailed above this notice is covered in the Privacy Notice for staff, councillors and role holders.

iii) Data security breach report

iv) Freedom of information Model Publication

v) Information and Data Protection Policy

vi) Retention and Disposal Policy

vii) List of Documents for Retention or Disposal

It was noted that the Clerk had updated this document to reflect what was currently done. It was highlighted that the office was due to relocate to the campus in the summer, therefore each document would be reviewed again to determine whether it still required to be stored or could be disposed of.

- viii) **Open Media Policy**
- ix) **Privacy Notice for staff, councillors and role holders**
- x) **Subject Access Request form and policy**

Members felt that as there was a lot of policies which came up at the same time on this agenda, that these policies should be sent around by email one at a time so that members can review and make any comments and recommendations. The IT policy would be the first to be reviewed.

c) To appoint a Data Protection Officer as current contract has expired

The Clerk explained that the original DPO (Data Protection Officer) was the council's current internal auditor on a three-year agreement, however this had now expired. The Clerk advised that the council was also changing their internal auditors for the 2022/23 financial year. The Clerk had contacted the current internal auditor who advised that this service was now part of their internal auditor services and hadn't thought about a stand-alone service.

The Clerk advised that the council did have rradar legal advice which was part of their parish council insurance. She explained that there had previously been a Subject Access Request and she did discuss this with the DPO at the time to ensure she was going through the correct process, she also contacted rradar and the ICO.

It was noted that there was no legal requirement for the council to have a DPO however there was a requirement to have a data controller which the council have delegated to the Clerk as the Proper Officer.

Members discussed whether a DPO was required given that the council had rradar for legal advice as part of the council's insurance. It was felt that there was no longer a requirement for the council to appoint a Data Protection Officer.

Recommendation: The council do not appoint a Data Protection Officer.

d) To review the council's current cyber insurance provisions and consider options for the next insurance year

Members felt that the current cyber insurance policy was more than adequate for what the parish council requires, therefore the council should continue with their current provision.

Recommendation: The council continue with their current cyber insurance provision.

Meeting closed at 22.04pm

Signed.....
Chairman, 21st February 2022