

MINUTES of the Finance Committee of Melksham Without Parish Council held on Monday 2nd March 2026 at Melksham Without Parish Council Offices, Melksham Community Campus (First Floor), Market Place, Melksham, SN12 6ES at 7.00pm

Present: Councillors John Glover (Chair of Council & Committee), David Pafford (Vice Chair of Council), Alan Baines, Richard Wood (from 8.30pm), John Doel (Vice Chair of Committee), and Mark Blackham.

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

In attendance in the room: There was one member of the public present at the meeting.

On Zoom: It was noted that Councillor Harris was in attendance at the meeting; he acknowledged that he was not a member of the Finance Committee and was at the meeting as an observer on behalf of Bowerhill Village Hall. Councillor Griffiths was in attendance on Zoom from 7.20pm but was classed as not present at the meeting.

Housekeeping: Councillor Glover welcomed everyone to the meeting. As the member of the public in the room was given the fire evacuation print out, this message was not read out. Everyone was aware that the meeting was being recorded and would be published on YouTube following the meeting and deleted once the minutes were approved.

483/25 Apologies:

The Clerk advised that Councillor Wood had a BASRAG (Berryfield and Semington Road Action Group) meeting, so would be arriving late; members approved this reason for absence. Councillor Griffiths was not present.

484/25 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Blackham declared a non pecuniary interest as Chair of BRAG (Bowerhill Residents Action Group). Councillor Glover subsequently declared an interest in min. 493/25, as his grandson was employed by the organisation being discussed.

485/25 Dispensation Requests for this Meeting

None.

486/25 To consider holding items in Closed Session due to confidential nature:

None.

487/25 Public Participation:

Standing Orders were suspended for a period of public participation.

A representative from the Bowerhill Scouts addressed the council regarding their grant application. He outlined the basis of the request and explained that the group has recently quadrupled the number of leaders involved. As a result, they are seeking funding towards driver training for their minibus to ensure enough qualified drivers are available to safely transport the scouts to their wide-ranging events and activities. Additionally, it was explained that the scouts are requesting financial support towards the purchase of tomahawk throwing equipment. He explained that this activity forms a fundamental part of scouting, providing young people with the opportunity to learn how to use the equipment safely for sporting and practical purposes only.

The meeting reconvened.

488/25 Grant Aid:

a) Grant Aid Policy:

Members noted the grant aid policy; Councillor Baines highlighted a few clauses that members needed to bear in mind when they were reviewing each grant application. Councillor Pafford noted that the policy stated that applications must accompany the latest set of accounts; however, some applicants had only submitted accounts up to 2024. It was clarified that if applicants have not supplied sufficient accounts, the council will request that they provide them before a grant is awarded.

b) Budget Provision for 2026/27:

Councillor Glover advised that the council had the following budget provisions in place:

S133 (Village Hall Grants)

£26,000

This included an element for match funding for Shaw Village Hall car park project if required.

S137 Grants

£25,000

S144 (Tourism)

£750.00

Community projects/ Match Funding reserve in 2026/27

£15,099

It was noted that the parish council had the General Power of Competence and, therefore, did not need to be tied to a maximum spend under S137 of the Local Government Act 1972. The parish council has previously agreed that it would be prudent to retain these budget headings in case it loses this in the future (the power is dependent on the number of councillors elected).

c) Method of how grants are awarded:

The Clerk explained that at last year's Annual Parish meeting, one of the organisations had commented that they were charged when they cashed in a cheque, which was why she had put it on the agenda for members to consider. The council's current procedure is to award grants by cheque, which would be presented to each successful organisation at the Annual Parish meeting. It was explained that the Annual Parish meeting was a celebration of a year in the parish and was a good opportunity for each organisation to say a few words about their activities during the year when they were awarded their grant. There has been a concern previously that if the council awarded grants by BACS, the meeting may receive a low attendance, and this would be a missed opportunity to celebrate all of the good work each group has done. In addition, one of the legal stipulations for organisations that have been awarded grants over £2,000 is for them to provide details on how they have spent the money, so by them filling out the application and attending the meeting it helps with this requirement, as they can explain how the previous year's grant has been spent.

Officers had produced a paper which included options that the council could consider. After a discussion, members agreed that the council should adopt a hybrid approach whereby the grant continues to be awarded by cheque at the meeting, but any organisation that wishes to be paid by BACS can return their cheque on the night and provide their BACS details in a secure way.

Recommendation: The council continue awarding grants by cheque at the Annual Parish meeting, with the option for organisations to be paid by BACS by returning the cheque on the evening and providing their bank details for payment, which complies with GDPR.

d) Grant Applications 2026/27

Councillor Glover explained that the council had received 42 grant applications, with requests totalling £59,581.95. The Clerk advised members that the grant received from that meeting space should be under section 133, as it was a small community space which quite often hosted start-up groups and organisations. It was noted that it wasn't a village hall, but this budget heading was more appropriate. Officers had moved this under the correct heading on the grant spreadsheet earlier on in the day.

Councillor Blackham abstained from voting on the Bowerhill Residents Action Group grant application, as he had declared an interest at the start of the meeting as Chair of this group.

Grants Awarded 2026/27

	TYPE	ORGANISATION	Awarding in 2026/27
SECTION 133 GRANTS (HALLS)			
1	Other halls	Bowerhill Village Hall Trust	£5,000
2	Owned by MWPC	Shaw Hill Playing Field and Village Hall	£10,500
3	Owned by MWPC	Berryfield Village Hall	£1,590

4	Other halls	The Rachel Fowler Centre	£250
5	Other halls	Whitley Reading Rooms	£3,490
27	Community	that meeting space administered by GoodNews Church	£300
SECTION 133 GRANTS (HALLS) total			£21,130.00
SECTION 137 GRANTS			
6	Action Groups	Bowerhill Residents Action Group (BRAG)	£600
7	Action Groups	Berryfield & Semington Rd Action Group (BASRAG)	£500
8	Action Groups	Community Emergency Group (CEG)- Whitley and Shaw	£354
9	Action Groups	Community Action Whitley Shaw (CAWS)	£3,000
Action Groups Total			£4,454.00
10	Youth	4Youth (South West) - formerly Young Melksham	£3,000
11	Youth	1st Bowerhill Scout Group	£1,500.00
12	Youth	Bowerhill Pre-School	Clarification required
13	Youth	Melksham Guide Association	£568.95
Youth Total			£5,068.95
14	Support Groups	Group Five	£600
15	Support Groups	Wiltshire and Bath Air Ambulance Charity	£1,000
16	Support Group	Age UK Wiltshire	£900
17	Support Group	Beyond Dementia (formerly Alzheimer's Support)	£450
18	Support Group	Meadowbrook (Wiltshire) CIC	£270
19	Support Group	Wiltshire Search and Rescue Team	£695
20	Support Group	Friends of Giffords Surgery	£700
21	Support Group	St John Ambulance Devizes and Central Wiltshire Network	£250
22	Support Group	Families Out Loud	£750
23	Support Group	Melksham Foodbank and Lifeline CIO	£400

24	Support Group	FearFree Charity (Formally Splitz Support Service)	£750
Support Groups Total			£6,765.00
25	Community	Melksham Food & River Festival	£600
26	Community	Shaw & Whitley Community Hub Ltd	£2,000
28	Community	Crimestoppers Trust – Wiltshire Volunteer Committee	£150
29	Community	Melksham Carnival	£520
Community Total			£3,270.00
42	Community Info	Shaw & Whitley Connect	Application withdrawn
30	Community Info	Melksham Remembers	£175
Community Info Total			£175.00
31	Clubs	AFC Melksham (Disabled)	£300
32	Clubs	Melksham Gardeners' Society	£300
33	Clubs	Shaw & Whitley Garden Club	£300
34	Clubs	Melksham WI	£150
35	Clubs	Corsham Windband Association	£0
36	Clubs	SixtyPlus	£500
37	Clubs	Corsham Cricket Club	£2,000
38	Clubs	Melksham and Corsham Gateway Club	£1,000
39	Clubs	Bowerhill Ladies	£500
40	Clubs	Shaw and Whitley Art Group	£200
Clubs Total			£5,250.00
Section 137 GRANTS Total			£24,982.95
SECTION 144 GRANTS (TOURISM)			
41	Tourism	Melksham Tourist Information Centre	£600
Tourism Total			£600
Grant Total			£46,712.95

8. CAWS and 42. Shaw & Whitley Connect: The Clerk reported that CAWS had submitted a funding request to support the reinstatement of Connect after speaking to the editor of the magazine, as it had stalled in recent times. Subsequently, the council had received an application from the Connect magazine in the post after the grant deadline. It

was noted that the application had been included with other correspondence that was dated prior to the deadline; therefore, it was believed to have been posted before the closing date. Both parties had been contacted to clarify the situation, and as a result, Connect magazine has requested that its application be withdrawn from the process. The Clerk highlighted to members that the accounts submitted in the Connect application were for the organisation, whereas the accounts submitted for the CAWS application were for CAWS as they obviously didn't have access to the other accounts. It was clarified that the funding request from CAWS was costed up to run, print and distribute the magazine across Shaw and Whitley for a year, without relying on advertising. It is assumed that as the magazine hasn't been printed for a while, a lot of the advertising has now gone. Although members felt that the funding request was high, they acknowledged that if the magazine had not been running for some time, they would need to get advertising back, so it was agreed to support the full request this year.

11. 1st Bowerhill Scouts: Members were happy to support the £1,500 request for D1 driver training; however, they were not happy to support the application for tomahawk axe equipment.

The representative from the Scouts left the meeting after the above application was discussed.

12. Bowerhill Pre School: It was noted that this application was only accompanied by a year-end balance sheet and did not include details of income and expenditure for the year. Concerns were raised about the fact that this application was requesting funding towards repairs on their access decking ramp, which was also used by children from Bowerhill Primary School. Members questioned whether, if the ramp was used by the primary school children too, the responsibility lay with the White Horse Federation. If this was the case, it would be contrary to clause 5 of the grant aid policy. It was acknowledged that the White Horse Federation were not responsible for the pre-school; however, they did have a responsibility to provide safe access to the school children.

Members discussed the location of the ramp and whether it was in fact used by primary school children as detailed in the grant application. Standing orders were suspended so that members could defer to Councillor Harris, who was on Zoom and was familiar with the school and pre-school buildings. He confirmed that there was an access at the back of the pre-school which went into the primary school, so this may be the ramp that is being referred to in the application. The meeting reconvened.

As members were unclear on the location of the ramp and who was responsible for its maintenance, it was agreed that this application should be refused subject to clarification on the matters raised.

14. Group Five: Members acknowledged the good work that this organisation does; however, noted that although the application mentions the number of people they have helped in Melksham does not specifically mention the areas of the parish. As these detailed were not provided in the application, members were unable to award the full grant requested and agreed to award £600.

21. St John Ambulance Devizes: Members noted that this application provided free first aid training to schools across Melksham; however, questioned how many residents of the parish would benefit from this training, as there were only Shaw, Bowerhill and Melksham

Oak School which resided in the parish. It was highlighted that although this organisation had applied to other councils for funding, they had not applied to Melksham Town Council, considering that they were providing training in facilities in the town. Members felt that based on the above discussions they could not award the full funding request; however, agreed to award £250. Members suggested that this organisation should apply to Melksham Town Council for funding.

36. SixtyPlus: Members could not see much evidence in the application that residents of the parish attended this group. It was noted that this group meets at Queensway Chapel, which is located in the town, and the application for funding was for community bus hire to get members to the venue. It was further noted that from the application, this group has not applied to Melksham Town Council despite it being held in the town. After a discussion, members did not feel that they could award the full amount requested; however, agreed to award £500.

37. Corsham Cricket Club: Members acknowledged that this application was for funding towards a new sports pavilion on the community field at the rear of St Barnabas Church in Beanacre. It was explained that due to the increase in usage in the Corsham area, they now need to use Beanacre to cope with the amount of participation. It was noted that the application did not detail how many residents of the parish attended, although the Clerk had since obtained this information from them in relation to another matter. Members were happy to support the project but did not feel that they could award £4,000 as requested. It was agreed to award £2,000 for this project.

39. Bowerhill Ladies: It was highlighted that there was some reference in this application that this organisation wishes to contribute more to charity. It was noted that quite often the speakers who come in give their fee to charity, which would not be against the grant aid policy, and there was no evidence in this organisation's accounts that they gave to charity themselves. Members were happy to support this application in full but felt that the organisation needed to be made aware that although the council understood that the speakers can give to charity, they would be ineligible if they presented the money themselves to charity.

Recommendation 1: The council refuse the request for funding from Bowerhill pre-school subject to clarification regarding the location of the access ramp and confirmation of responsibility for its maintenance. Officers to bring the information back to the March Full Council meeting in order for a final decision to be made on this application.

Recommendation 2: The Council award grants to organisations as per the list detailed above.

Recommendation 3: The Council do not award Grants to the following organisations for the following reasons:

35. Corsham Windband Association: Members noted that the application was for the purchase of instruments for students who attend Churchfields School in Atworth. Although it was acknowledged that there may be a few children who attend this school from Shaw and Whitley, it was considered that it would be very few, if any. After a discussion, members felt that this application should be refused on the basis that there is no evidence that it benefits the residents of Melksham Without, which is a requirement under clause 1 of the grant aid policy.

489/25C Area Board Grants:

This item went into closed session.

The Clerk raised concerns about how funding requests to the Melksham Area Board were being considered, as there didn't appear to be consistency between the towns and parishes. She reported that she was aware of some projects in the parish being required to have match funding from the parish council, whereas this didn't appear to be a requirement for projects in the town. There was no requirement detailed in their grant policy which stipulated that councils had to provide match funding towards projects that were applying to the Area Board for funding.

The Clerk explained that there had been an identified issue raised at the health and wellbeing meeting about residents not being able to get to Age UK Fun & Fitness sessions at Bowerhill or to counselling sessions in Trowbridge. She is aware that there was some Area Board Health & Wellbeing funding available, and Wiltshire Councillor Hubbard and the Wiltshire Council Community Engagement manager had dropped into the office to discuss a scheme that may help with this. It was explained that in order to set up a councillor initiative, it needs to have support, and it was asked whether the parish council would support a community transport scheme.

Discussions ensued on how to move forward, and it was felt that the council should identify which applications outside of the town have required match funding, to provide evidence to the Area Board. This should be looked at in conjunction with the outcome of applications for town projects. It was felt that correspondence should be sent to the Area Board stating that the parish council had reason to believe that there seems to be inconsistency between town and parish applications and ask for a policy to be adopted so that consistency is clear. It was agreed that a member of the council would attend the next Melksham Area Board meeting to speak on this matter.

Councillor Wood arrived at the meeting during this agenda item and voted on this item.

Recommendation: The council to send correspondence to the Melksham Area Board requesting that they adopt a policy on how they award funding so that there is consistency as per the discussions above.

490/25 CIL and Section 106:

a) Response from Melksham Town Council on joint CIL arrangements:

The Clerk reported that no response had been received from the town council following her email regarding the parish council's consideration of withdrawing from the joint CIL arrangement in place. It was understood that the town council were still looking into how much CIL they had received and how much was related to the shared pot as per the agreement.

Officers had met with the new RFO (Responsible Financial Officer) to show them how to find the Wiltshire Council CIL spreadsheet so that they could trace the CIL due to the town council, which was some weeks ago. Town council officers also met with the Wiltshire Council CIL officers to try and resolve the issue; however, no further update

had been received by the Clerk since then. It was noted that the end of the financial year was approaching and that, as part of the parish council's accounting procedure, any funds held relating to joint projects was documented in the accounts (including funds held by the town council where these relate to shared projects). Due to the town council being unable to identify how much CIL they had contributed into the shared pot, the parish council has been unable to accurately reflect this in their accounts over the past few years. As this matter had not progressed any further during the current financial year, it appears that the parish may again be unable to document this accurately in the 2025/26 accounts.

Members expressed frustration that this matter had not moved further forward, despite the parish council previously informing the town council that they were considering ending the joint agreement and withdrawing their funds from the pot to spend on projects within the parish. Members agreed that the town council has had sufficient time to identify how much CIL funds they had. As a result, it was agreed that, should the town council not make satisfactory progress by the Full Council meeting on the 23rd March, the parish council should withdraw from the joint CIL arrangement at the end of the financial year (31st March 2026). It was felt that as this was a recommendation to the Full Council on 23rd March, the Clerk should send an email to the town council now so that they had ample opportunity to respond.

Recommendation: The council withdraw all of their funds from the CIL sharing pot arrangement at year end (31st March 2026), if the town council have not made satisfactory progress by the Full Council meeting on 23rd March.

b) Update on transfer of funds from Melksham Town Council for East of Melksham Community Centre project:

The Clerk reported that she has not had an opportunity to follow up with the town CEO regarding the East of Melksham Community Centre funds, following the town council's resolution to transfer the funds to the parish council so that a large community centre could be built to serve the whole East of Melksham community. She noted that, in previous conversations with the CEO, she understood that the town council had contacted Wiltshire Council to request an extension for the use of CIL funding received from the Hunters Wood development, which was earmarked to be used towards the build of the new East of Melksham Community Centre. As discussed under the above agenda item, town council officers had since met with Wiltshire Council CIL officers; however, it was understood that they had not had any discussions with them in relation to this CIL at the meeting. As no clear answer has been received, and the town council has resolved to transfer the CIL back to the parish council for the East of Melksham Community Centre, the Clerk has contacted Wiltshire Council herself to try and obtain an answer. In addition, the Clerk has asked for clarification from Wiltshire Council regarding the total amount of CIL received from the Hunters Wood development, as the figures shown on the latest CIL spreadsheet appear to differ from those previously understood by parish officers. If the figures are different, this will affect the amount of CIL received by the town council from this development.

In terms of the s106 funding, Wiltshire Council had paid the town council c.£637,000 for the East of Melksham Community Centre; however, this was now being built in a different location than specified in the s106. She has asked Wiltshire Council how

permission may be granted for the community centre to be built at the Blackmore Farm site using this funding and whether a new side agreement would need to be drawn up. Members noted the latest update.

c) Appropriate rate of interest to be applied to joint funds:

The Clerk reminded members that, as part of the legal agreement when the parish council transferred c.£315k of CIL to the town council towards the East of Melksham Community Centre, the funds should be returned with interest should they not undertake the project themselves and transfer the funds back to the parish council. Additionally, there had been a comment some time ago from a town councillor as to whether the parish council was applying interest to the funds held in reserves for the Shurnhold Fields maintenance, as these monies are held on behalf of both councils. The Clerk explained that up until now, it has been difficult to determine a fair and workable interest rate, but she had noted that in the s106 agreements for both the Hunters Wood development and Shurnhold Fields maintenance, there is reference to an interest rate of 4% above the base rate. In addition, the s106 side agreement for the East of Melksham Community Centre requires the town council to put this money in a separate identifiable bank account with the accrued interest. She suggested that this rate could potentially be used as a basis for calculating interest on all joint funds held by both councils.

It was queried whether the s106 that Wiltshire Council had paid to the town council for the East of Melksham Community Centre was being held in a separate account. The Clerk advised that she could see no records of this in their published accounts. As discussed under the above agenda item the Clerk was in discussion with Wiltshire Council regarding the practicalities of using this funding, as the land on which the community centre is being built on differs from what is detailed in the s106. Members felt that, once clarification has been received from Wiltshire Council, and if it is confirmed that the funding can still be used for the new site, it would be clearer if the town council returned the funds to Wiltshire Council, who could then transfer them to the parish council. This would then place the responsibility on Wiltshire Council to ensure that the correct amount of interest had been applied to the funds as detailed in the s106 agreement.

Discussions moved on to the interest rate that should be applied to joint funds, as this would apply to the CIL the town council are holding for the community centre project (CIL transferred from the parish council), and the parish council are holding the s106 Shurnhold Fields maintenance fund. Members did not feel that 4% above the base rate could be applied to these funds as suggested because neither council would have accumulated this rate of interest. Members agreed that officers should investigate this further and bring back some suggestions to a future meeting.

Recommendation 1: The Clerk continue discussions with Wiltshire Council regarding the use of the s106 funding for the East of Melksham Community Centre given the change of the site location.

Recommendation 2: Subject to Wiltshire Council confirming that the s106 funding can be used for the new site, the parish council request that the town council return the s106 provision for the East of Melksham Community Centre to Wiltshire Council, so that it can be transferred to the parish council ensuring that the correct amount of interest has been applied to the funds as per the agreement.

Recommendation 3: Officers to investigate an appropriate interest rate to be applied to joint funds held by both the parish council and town council and bring back to a future meeting.

491/25 Procurement: Specification and evaluation of future project:

The Clerk advised that some members had raised comments about the council's capacity and skill set to ensure best value when procuring items and works. She sought a steer from members on how the council should approach procurement for future projects and had included a note in the meeting agenda pack detailing the council's current procurement procedures (deferred from the February full council meeting as was a late paper). The Clerk explained that for very large high cost projects, such as the construction of Berryfield Village Hall, the council recognised that it did not have the expertise to manage this project and, therefore, employed a project manager. This had worked well, as the project manager had the appropriate knowledge and experience to guide the council through appointing the project team and managing the project. In terms of the East of Melksham Community Centre, the Clerk advised that she was aware that a Bromham resident had project managed the build of Bromham Community Centre and suggested that there may be an opportunity to meet with them to discuss 'lessons learnt' from that project. There may also be an opportunity to see whether they were interested in undertaking the project management role for the East of Melksham Community Centre project or if they could recommend someone suitable. Members felt that it would be a good idea to meet with them informally. It was agreed that the council should form an East of Melksham Community Centre working party which included a member from the town council.

The council were currently reviewing their website and had resolved to create a new one in order to meet accessibility requirements. Officers had drawn up a specification in order to obtain quotes; however, some members felt that it needed some more work around weighting for quotation evaluation. Officers do not have the technical expertise, and it was suggested that a small working group of members with procurement experience should be formed to assist with the procurement process. It was noted that this group didn't necessarily need to be involved in the design and set up of the website, as there was already an IT working party.

It was agreed at the January Full Council meeting that officers would obtain a quote for the equipment that needed to be replaced and a cost for replacing all of the equipment inside of Beanacre Play Area. This would be difficult for officers to do without any steer on specification requirements because they would be unable to get comparable quotes. It was noted that there were some play area companies that offered surveys and design schemes; however, any scheme produced would likely favour that company's equipment. The Clerk advised that she had received some correspondence from a project manager offering services for play area projects and queried at what stage it would be appropriate for the council to appoint a project manager, as this was much more straightforward for large projects such as a community centre but less clear for smaller projects like this. Members discussed the type of play equipment required for this play area and whether the council wished to replace it with higher end items or keep it at a basic level. Members did not feel that Beanacre would be a destination play area; therefore, considered that more basic equipment would be appropriate. Members moved on to discuss the budget, as it would be difficult to ask someone to come up with a scheme for the site without an

idea of the budget. Members felt that officers should contact a few play area companies and ask them to come up with proposals to replace all of the equipment inside of the play area, specifying that this should be metal rather than wooden equipment.

The Clerk explained that for small scale works, officers did not always try to obtain for three estimate; this was primarily because contractors were often unwilling to spend time attending sites to quote for minor works. Additionally, it can cost more in officer time for them to arrange and attend the site in order for a contractor to quote. The council has an approved supplier list, and officers sometimes request quotes from a contractor on this list for small scale works, as they know the areas and do not require officers to attend site each time. For works associated with the Bowerhill Sports Field, officers normally ask for advice from the council's ground contractors who undertake the normal maintenance of the field and do not obtain alternative quotes for additional maintenance works.

For noticeboards, bins and benches, the parish council have their own standardised models for each of these items to maintain consistency across the whole parish, which also has the same key system, and as such, these items are not purchased from an alternative supplier. Additionally, these items are delivered to the ground contractor's yard, as the parish council do not have their own storage facility, and as a result, they are asked to install these items. The Clerk highlighted that the council were not currently fully meeting their financial regulations with regard to the requirement for officers to either obtain three quotes or estimates for works. After a discussion, it was felt that a clause should be put in the financial regulations which stated, 'Where the council has standardised products such as bins, benches and noticeboards, it is acknowledged that the council will not seek alternative quotes in order to achieve uniformity across the parish.' Members also agreed that officers did not need to obtain alternative quotes for installation of benches, noticeboards and bins, as these were delivered directly to the ground contractor's yard.

Recommendation 1: The parish council set up and appoint members to the following working parties at the March Full Council meeting:

- East of Melksham Community Centre Working Party
- Website Procurement Working Party

Recommendation 2: The council arrange a site visit and an informal meeting with the project manager of Bromham Community Centre to discuss 'lessons learned'.

Recommendation 3: Officers to contact a few play area companies and ask them to come up with proposals to replace all equipment inside of Beanacre Play Area.

Recommendation 4:

- The council does not need to obtain alternative quotations for small scale works if it is for council standardised items and if they are delivered to the ground contractor's yard for installation.
- The financial regulations should be updated to include a clause under the procurement section which states 'Where the council has standardised products such as bins, benches and noticeboards it is acknowledged that the council will not seek alternative quotes in order to achieve uniformity across the parish'.

492/25 Bank Accounts:

a) Unity Trust Bank Instant Access account:

The Clerk explained that the Unity Trust Bank Instant Access account was previously used to spread the council's money between banks, but officers did not feel this account was now required. It was noted that the council deposited the majority of their funds into a CCLA account, which is treated as an instant access account, as funds can be accessed on the same day as long as the request is submitted before the deadline. Members agreed that this account was no longer required and it could be closed.

Recommendation: The council close the Unity Trust Bank Instant Access account as it was no longer required.

b) Increase of FSCS deposit protection limit and implications for the council:

The Clerk made members aware that the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS) deposit protection was increasing to £120,000. It was noted that local authorities were not eligible under this scheme unless they had a budget less than €500,000, which refers to the amount of income available to spend during the year. This equated to around £430,000 but does vary depending on exchange rates. As it currently stands for the current financial year, the parish council is not eligible under this scheme, as the budgeted income for the year was £497,600. For 2026/27 the council is slightly below the threshold so would be eligible (depending on exchange rates); however, members were cautioned on this because the budget was not too far away from the threshold. It was noted that most of the council's money was held in the CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund, which is a money market fund and not a bank account, so it is not covered by the FSCS. It was noted that the fund is regulated by the FCA (Financial Conduct Authority) and has an AAmmf credit rating by Fitch (credit rating agency), which is the highest possible rating it can have. The fund is designed to provide high liquidity and capital stability. Members noted this.

493/25 Bowerhill Sports Field:

a) Requests from teams to hire the sports pavilion and field for next season:

The Finance & Amenities Officer explained that FOF FC had advised that they were looking to enter an adult team into the adult Trowbridge and District league next season. They had asked whether there would be capacity for their adult team to use the sports field as their home venue next season. The Finance & Amenities Officer reminded members that FOF FC hosted all of their youth matches at the sports field across the weekend and wished to continue doing so with an adult team, allowing their younger teams to watch and see a progression route. It was noted that this was normally an Asset Management meeting matter; however, it did inform the council's fees and charges, and the organisation was seeking an answer as soon as possible.

The Finance & Amenities Officer had included a report in the agenda pack which outlined the council's current procedure when it came to home bookings and pitch capacity. It was noted that this season the council hosts four home teams, one on a Saturday and three on a Sunday, with two 11 aside pitches available. Members were aware that a number of matches have been cancelled this season due to poor weather

conditions, but this had also affected other venues too. It was explained that the middle 11 aside pitch has waterlogging issues; however, the council has approved works to this pitch, which should improve the pitch drainage. Due to the weather, the contractors have been unable to get onto the field to undertake the mole ploughing works, but it is expected that these works will be completed before the start of next season.

Members discussed whether it would be possible to accommodate a further team if all current teams returned next season, or whether FOF FC would have to wait and see whether a team withdraws. The Finance & Amenities Officer explained that there can only be two home teams at home per day, and if the council were minded to allow an additional team, a special agreement could be put in place whereby only one Saturday team is scheduled at home per weekend. This would mean that the maximum number of 11 aside matches played per weekend would be three. Members expressed concerns about overuse of the pitches, considering that only two 11 asides were available and would therefore be used every weekend. The Finance & Amenities Officer advised that the council had recently entered into the second year of the sports field enhancement project, so more maintenance was being undertaken at the field to improve its overall condition. Members also acknowledged that FOF FC hired a large majority of the sports field on the weekend and felt that it was important that they didn't dominate the use of the facility, as it would start looking like it was their own facility and not the parish council's; additionally, the field was very much for the community to use. Furthermore, members felt that even though the field was receiving more maintenance, it was only in the early stages, and the council did not want to risk overusing the pitches, which would undo the work that has already been done.

After a discussion, members agreed that they should not increase their capacity to five adult home teams, and FOF FC should be put on the waiting list in case one of the current adult teams decides not to return to the sports field next season.

Recommendation: The council do not increase their capacity to five adult teams next season and add FOF FC to a waiting list in case one of the current teams withdraws next season.

b) Fees and charges for the 2026/27 football season starting 1st August 2026:

The Finance & Amenities Officer had provided members with the current fees and charges for the sports field and pavilion, ready to be implemented from 1st August 2026. Members felt that all rates should be increased by 3.8%, which is the rate that the Government use to increase their benefits annually (September 2025 rate of inflation) and are as follows for 2026/27:

Football Pitch	2026/27
Club – per match – adult with use of pavilion	£74.00
Club- per match – adult without use of pavilion	£43.00
Club – per match – junior 9v9 pitch without use of pavilion	£37.00
Club – per match – junior 7v7 pitch without use of pavilion	£31.00
Club – per match – junior 5v5 pitch without use of pavilion	£24.00

Blanket Booking- Future of Football FC (FoF FC)	£123.00 per weekend (For the use of Youth Pitches only)
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Hire of outside toilet and car park for training sessions	2026/27
Under 25 people	£18.00
From 26-50 people	£25.00
Over 50 people	£37.00

Hire of 11 aside moveable goal posts for training (Note this is for the hire of the goal post equipment only and does not include use of car park or pavilion facilities)	2026/27
Hire of 11 aside moveable goal posts for training	£11.00 per training session

Training Camps for Future of Football Ltd	2026/27
Includes use of car park, changing rooms to store bags for the day and outside toilet	£123.00 per session

Bowerhill Bomber race	£92.00
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Hire of Kitchen and games room	2026/27
To charge an hourly rate of £6.00 per hour with a minimum charge of £12.00 per session.	
1 hour hire	£13.00
2-hour hire	£13.00
3-hour hire	£19.00
4-hour hire	£25.00
5-hour hire	£31.00

Recommendation: The council increase the sports field and pavilion hire charges to the fees listed above for the 2026/27 football season, to come into effect from the 1st August 2026.

c) Charges for youth tournament in the summer:

The Finance & Amenities Officer reported that FOF FC were hosting a youth tournament across the weekend of 13th & 14th June at the Bowerhill Sports Field. The council do not have a charging schedule for tournaments and have looked at this on a case by case basis each year. The Finance & Amenities Officer advised that last year the council charge the organisation for the following:

- FOF FC weekend blanket booking rate for the field- (For 25/26 the rate is
- £118.50)

- Cleaning costs for the changing rooms (£84)
- Use of kitchen and games room for the whole weekend (£50)
- Specialist line marking which is yet to be determined depending on the layout.

Members agreed that the organisation should be charged as per the above for their tournament.

Members commented that this was a good event for children across the whole of Wiltshire.

Recommendation: The parish council charge FOF FC for their youth tournament as detailed above.

494/25 Audit:

a) Appointment of Internal Auditor for 2026/27:

The Clerk explained that an internal auditor needed to be independent and competent as well as having relevant knowledge of the public sector. This was something that the council reviewed on an annual basis for the next financial year. The Clerk had included information from the JPAG (Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance) Practitioners Guide, which details what the council should be looking at when appointing an internal auditor. Officers had obtained an alternative quote from another internal auditor, which was sent out as a late paper, as the council had been with the current auditor for some time. Members agreed that the council received good service from the current internal auditor and, as he had the relevant knowledge, was still independent and competent did not feel that the council needed to change internal auditors.

Recommendation: The council appoint IAC Audit and Consultancy as the internal auditor for the 2026/27 financial year.

b) Potential response to new Assertion 10 (Data Protection & Website Accessibility) on the AGAR (Annual Governance & Accountability Return) for 2025/26 to the External Auditor:

The Clerk reminded members that there was a new assertion being added to the AGAR (Annual Governance and Accountability Return) for the current financial year, known as Assertion 10. This requires councils to have compliance with digital governance and data protection standards. Officers had provided members with a brief overview of where the council was with this new requirement. The one thing the council did not currently have was a fully accessible website, which was something that was in progress but would not be done before the end of the current financial year. The Clerk explained that there seemed to be some conflicting information with regard to whether the council could answer 'yes' or 'no' to this assertion at year end. Some advice seemed to imply that the council could say 'yes' because they had a plan to address it, whereas other information seems to suggest that the council was unable to because they don't fully meet the requirements under this assertion. The Clerk had contacted WALC (Wiltshire Association of Local Councils) for some guidance on this and was waiting for a response.

The Clerk wanted to pre-warn members that the council may have to answer 'no' to this assertion in the annual governance statement at the 2025/26 year end. As a response had not been received from WALC, members were unable to consider a response until the guidance had been received.

Recommendation: The council wait for guidance from WALC in order to consider a response to assertion 10.

c) Trial/pilot for digital AGAR submission for 2025/26

The Clerk advised members that the parish council were taking part in the pilot for the digital AGAR submission system for 2025/26.

Members noted this.

Meeting closed at 9.57pm

Signed.....
Chairman, Monday 23rd March 2026