

**MINUTES of the Staffing Committee of Melksham Without Parish Council
held on Monday 20th July 2026 at Melksham Without Parish Council Offices
(First Floor), Melksham Community Campus, Market Place, SN12 6ES at
7:00pm**

Present: Councillors Alan Baines, Mark Blackham, John Glover (Council Chair), Tony Hemmings, David Pafford (Council Vice-Chair) and Anne Sullivan

Officers: Teresa Strange (Clerk)

There were no members of the public or council attending remotely via Zoom.

128/26 Welcome & Housekeeping:

Everyone present was aware that the meeting was being recorded and would be published on YouTube following the meeting and deleted once the minutes were approved.

129/26 Apologies:

Resolved: Apologies had been received from Councillor Griffiths, who was working away from home, this reason for absence were accepted.

130/26 Chair & Vice-Chair of Staffing Committee for 2026/27

The outgoing Chair, Councillor Sullivan sought nominations for Chair.

- a) Councillor Sullivan was nominated as Chair of the Staffing Committee who confirmed that she was willing to stand. There were no further nominations.

Resolved: Councillor Sullivan elected as Chair of the Staffing Committee for the ensuing year.

Councillor Sullivan chaired the meeting.

- b) Councillor Griffiths had confirmed in advance that she was still willing to continue as Vice Chair, and was nominated as Vice-Chair of the Staffing Committee. There were no further nominations.

Resolved: Councillor Griffiths elected as Vice-Chair of the Staffing Committee for the ensuing year.

- 131/26 Declarations of Interest:** The Clerk declared that, as an employee of the Council, a number of the matters under consideration affected her employment. She would leave the room if any matter related specifically to her. No other declarations of interest were made.

132/26 To consider holding items in Closed Session due to confidential nature:

Resolved: All the agenda items from 12 to 16 as they were specific to members of staff.

The detailed supporting discussion, evidence considered and reasoning for the Committee's decisions are recorded separately in approved confidential supporting notes, access to which is restricted to the Clerk and members of the Staffing Committee. A separate confidential recommendation schedule records

the formal recommendations requiring consideration by Full Council and is circulated to all councillors, the Clerk and the Finance and Amenities Officer. The Finance and Amenities Officer receives the schedule to the extent necessary for payroll administration and other operational duties, including confirming that expenditure, training bookings and associated invoices have been properly authorised. The public minutes record only the non-confidential summary of the decisions and refer to the relevant confidential documents where appropriate.

133/26 Public Participation:

This item fell as there were no members of the public present.

134/26 Health and Safety

a) Health and Safety matters since the last meeting

The Clerk reported that no new health and safety matters had been brought to her attention.

b) Arrangements during extreme hot weather

The Committee noted the arrangements put in place during the recent red heat alert. Outdoor staff had been reminded to wear suitable clothing and hats, suncream, remain hydrated, restrict activity to essential inspections and minimum duties, and work split or earlier hours where appropriate. The approach had been based on a dynamic risk assessment of the conditions and duties at the time.

Resolved: The approach taken was endorsed. The Clerk was authorised to apply a dynamic risk assessment and make proportionate temporary adjustments to duties and working hours during future periods of extreme weather, taking account of the circumstances and the needs of individual roles.

c) Health and Safety legislation summary

The Committee noted the Health and Safety Legal Register included in the agenda pack. Members considered it a useful reference document bringing together key duties and sources of further guidance. It was specifically noted that a number of the legislative requirements referred to in the register apply where an employer has five or more employees. The Council currently employed five members of staff, although not all were full-time, and members noted the importance of ensuring that the relevant requirements were identified and complied with.

Resolved 1: The Health and Safety Legal Register was noted and retained as a reference document.

Resolved 2: The Clerk would check that the current HSE Health and Safety Law poster was displayed at both the allotment shed and Bowerhill Sports Pavilion.

135/26 NALC (National Association of Local Councils) Good Councillor's Guide to Employment

The Committee noted the NALC guide and the responsibilities of councillors collectively as the employer. Particular attention was drawn to the handling of employee information, including the possibility of employee data-subject access requests, and the importance of keeping appropriate, factual records.

Resolved: The NALC Good Councillor's Guide to Employment was noted.

136/26 Employment Rights Act 2025

The Committee considered the summary of current and forthcoming employment-law changes. Matters highlighted included the reduced qualifying period for unfair-dismissal rights, the need for probationary arrangements and reviews to conclude within an appropriate period, the removal of compensation caps in relevant cases,

employees' right to be informed about trade-union membership, and the strengthened expectation that employers justify any refusal of a flexible-working request.

The Council's usual probationary period was discussed. The updated model contract suggested 13 weeks, which was considered preferable to a period approaching six months, while recognising that regular documented review would be required.

Resolved: The legislative changes were noted.

Recommendation 1: Future recruitment documentation should normally use a 13-week probationary period, subject to the requirements of the particular role and appropriate HR advice.

Recommendation 2: The Clerk would ensure that employees were given any written information required by the new legislation, including information about the right to join a trade union.

137/26 Updated NALC Model Contract of Employment

The Clerk outlined the substantial work undertaken in late 2023 to update the Council's existing employment contracts, which took effect from 1st January 2024, and the further model-contract revisions subsequently issued. The Committee considered the risk of creating different terms for comparable employees if the newest model were adopted only for future recruits, as per the NALC recommendation.

Particular differences included automatic annual scale-point progression rather than the Council's existing review-and-appraisal approach, and restrictions on payment for additional hours for employees above a specified scale point. The Clerk declared a particular interest in the latter provision, as it currently applied only to her role.

Recommendation 1: The five existing employment contracts would remain in place and no immediate wholesale replacement exercise would be undertaken.

Recommendation 2: The Council's standard contract for future recruitment and any necessary clarifications or variations for existing staff would be reviewed with specialist HR advice. Material changes to existing contractual terms would not be imposed without consultation and agreement.

138/26 National Pay Negotiations 2026/27

The Committee noted that national negotiations remained ongoing. The employers' offer was understood to be a 3.3% increase, subject to the outcome of negotiations with the unions. Any agreed award would be backdated to 1st April 2026.

139/26C Staff Training and Development

Held in closed session.

Resolved: That the staff training record be noted.

Recommendation: That Full Council approve the staff training and associated funding proposals set out in the confidential Full Council Recommendations Schedule dated 20th July 2026.

140/26C Staff Appraisals

Held in closed session.

Recommendation: That Full Council approve the recommendations arising from the staff appraisals as set out in the confidential Full Council Recommendations Schedule dated 20th July 2026.

141/26C Job Descriptions

Held in closed session.

The Committee considered the Job Descriptions alongside the appraisal feedback and the operational needs of the Council.

Recommendation: That Full Council approve the proposed job description reviews and amendments set out in the confidential Full Council Recommendations Schedule dated 20th July 2026.

142/26C Scale Point Reviews

Held in closed session.

Recommendation: The Full Council approve the staff scale point recommendations, effective dates and associated future reviews set out in the confidential Full Council Recommendations Schedule dated 20th July 2026

143/26C Flexible Working Arrangement

Held in closed session.

It was noted that the office was formally advertised as open to the public from Monday to Thursday only. Although officers had often answered enquiries on Fridays when present, the door was likely to be open less frequently under the new arrangement, as Fridays were commonly used for time off in lieu and site visits. This helped maintain officer cover during the published opening days earlier in the week. Telephone and other contact arrangements would remain available.

Recommendation: The Full Council approve the recommendation relating to the trial flexible working arrangement, as set out in the confidential Full Council Recommendations Schedule dated 20th July 2026

144/26 Clerk's Appraisal

The Committee agreed that the Clerk's appraisal should be undertaken by the Chair of the Staffing Committee and the Vice-Chair of Council. This reflected the intention of the Council's disciplinary protocols by keeping the Chair of Council separate, should any future disciplinary or appeal process arise.

Resolved: The Clerk's appraisal would be undertaken by Councillor Anne Sullivan, Chair of the Staffing Committee, and Councillor David Pafford, Vice-Chair of Council, and was provisionally arranged for Friday 7th August 2026, subject to confirmation.

145/26 Annual Leave Recorded in Hours

The Committee considered the proposal to record annual leave in hours rather than days. This would better reflect different daily and compressed working patterns and allow staff to take only the hours actually required. The change would not alter any employee's overall contractual entitlement.

Recommendation: That staff annual leave entitlement be calculated, recorded and deducted in hours rather than days, using the methodology set out in the agenda report, subject to the Clerk confirming that the calculation aligned with the relevant government guidance. Existing balances would be converted so that no employee gained or lost entitlement solely because of the change.

146/26 Administration of Community and Village Facebook Groups

The Committee reviewed the Council's involvement in independent community Facebook groups. The Clerk explained that she was an administrator of several groups and the sole administrator of two. A recent threat of legal action concerning third-party comments illustrated the legal, reputational and staff-welfare exposure created by officers administering groups which were not official Council channels. The administration role was also linked to the Clerk's Council Facebook profile.

Members considered that officers should not retain responsibility for administering or moderating independent community Facebook groups. Where other community administrators remained, the officer could withdraw as an administrator. Where an officer was the sole administrator, the community should be given an opportunity to take over the administration before the group was closed down completely.

Recommendation: That officers cease acting as administrators of independent community Facebook groups. Where other administrators remained, the officer would withdraw as an administrator. Where an officer was the sole administrator, notice would be posted inviting a community member to take over administration by Friday 14th August 2026. If nobody came forward, the group would be closed down completely.

147/26 Mileage Reimbursement Rates

The Committee noted that existing contracts referred to NJC mileage rates, although the Council had historically reimbursed business mileage at HMRC Approved Mileage Allowance Payment rates because of the tax and payroll implications of the detailed NJC scheme.

Recommendation: That Full Council adopt the HMRC Approved Mileage Allowance Payment rate of 55p per mile for the first 10,000 authorised business miles in each tax year and 25p per mile thereafter; that the revised rate be applied retrospectively from 6th April 2026; and that eligible employees be reimbursed for the difference on mileage claims already paid at 45p per mile since that date. Revised contract wording or written clarification would be prepared with appropriate HR advice.

148/26 External HR Support

The Committee considered whether the Council should appoint an external HR provider. It was noted that employment guidance and support were already available through the Council's memberships of the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC), the Wiltshire Association of Local Councils (WALC) and the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). Members also noted that recent Government employment legislation had increased the potential financial risk to employers, including the removal of the previous cap on compensation in some employment claims. The Committee considered that a proportionate, light-touch external HR support arrangement could provide ongoing assistance with

employment contracts, model documents and staffing policies, potentially through a subscription service, while also allowing the Council to call on specific advice for individual employment matters when required. This could reduce the administrative burden on the Clerk, recognise that the Clerk does not hold specific HR qualifications or extensive specialist HR experience, and provide independent support where the Clerk might otherwise have a conflict of interest.

Recommendation: That Full Council authorise the Clerk to obtain options and costs for a proportionate, light-touch external HR support service, preferably from a provider experienced in the parish and town council sector. This should include consideration of a subscription arrangement for support with contracts, model documents and staffing policies, together with access to specific advice on individual matters when required, before any appointment was made.

149/26 Review of Staffing Policies

The Committee noted that several policies had been reviewed by an officer, but that some of the underlying model template documents had subsequently been updated. Members considered that proceeding before the question of external HR support had been resolved could lead to duplicated work or the adoption of documents which required further revision. The Committee also recalled the unresolved note from the previous review of the Disciplinary Policy, which sought clearer definitions of “gross negligence” and “gross insubordination” with an explanation of the distinction “gross”.

Recommendation: That consideration of the Pension Policy, Habitual or Vexatious Complainants Policy, DBS Check Policy, Disciplinary Policy, Equality and Diversity Policy, Health and Safety Policy, Learning and Development Policy and Safeguarding Policy be deferred. If external HR support were approved, the appointed provider would be asked to review the policies against current legislation, guidance and the latest model templates, including providing suitable clarification within the Disciplinary Policy on gross negligence and gross insubordination, before the policies were returned to the Council for adoption.

Meeting closed at 9.03 pm

Chairman, 27th July 2026