

MELKSHAM TOWN COUNCIL



CORPORATE PLAN 2017-2021

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1. Introduction

This document is intended to provide a statement of Melksham Town Council's vision, purpose and objectives, and provide a context and framework for the work of the Council.

It seeks to describe a strategic overview within which the Council will operate in 2017-2021, the key aims and objectives it will strive towards and how these are to be achieved.

The plan is intended to make sure that the Council collectively strives towards these goals in order that successful outcomes can be achieved for the community it serves.

This document also helps to demonstrate how the Council's functions and services are directed and how they are related to the community.

The Council recognises that it must work together to make a real difference in moving Melksham forward as a desirable location to live, work and visit - ***"Unity and Progress"***.

2. Role of the Town Council

2.1 Offering the "first-tier", democratically elected, representational voice for the community

Melksham Town Council represents the most local tier of government. A statutory body of 15 elected members, it is subject to a wide range of legislation aimed at ensuring accountability and effectiveness. The Council carries out its business through a committee system consisting of three committees namely: Policy & Performance Committee; Planning Committee; and Community Development Committee. The Committee structure was recast following the election in 2017 and deliberately seeks to provide for more immediate and effective decision making with Committees holding delegated powers to deal with business within their particular remit save for some reserved powers for the Town Council, particularly as required by statute. The structure seeks to encourage timely action through the Asset Management; Community Development and Planning Committees with Policy and Performance Committee and Town Council meetings primarily undertaking a review role that critically analyses and promotes performance against objectives. Transparency and involvement are key elements, and members of the public and the press are welcome and encouraged to attend all meetings.

2.2 Improving the social, economic and environmental well being of the town

The Council aims to make a measurable difference to the quality of life of the town and to be responsive to the needs of its community. Clearly the Council cannot assume the role of decision maker in all matters, however even in areas such as Planning, the Council has a key role, as a statutory consultee, to represent the interests of its community on material grounds, particularly in relation to the nature and scope of new development initiatives. The Town Council will seek to work in partnership with relevant bodies and agencies and will embrace the use of social media and modern IT systems where possible to promote communication, transparency and engagement.

2.3 Pro active within, responsive to, and engaged with the community it serves

Melksham Town Council is fully committed to communicating, consulting and engaging with its residents and thereby building active involvement and trust with and within the community. Working to create an inclusive and vibrant community where the needs and abilities of people from all backgrounds are recognised and respected in line with equality legislation, the Town Council strives to establish closer relationships with groups representing senior citizens recognising the importance of social inclusion, and young people as the citizens and custodians of tomorrow's Melksham.

2.4 Promoting a conducive and effective working relationship with key stakeholders

The Council strives to encourage a strong relationship with all stakeholders recognising the value of their respective contribution to the community. Facilitating and co-ordinating as appropriate, the Council encourages partnership working that serves to promote local benefit. Strategic partners include: Wiltshire Council; Melksham Area Board; Wiltshire Police; Melksham Without Parish Council; health services; Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service; the Seniors forum; Melksham Chamber of Commerce; Housing Associations; Schools, Early Years and Youth Groups; and numerous voluntary sector and community groups. The Town Council will work together with Melksham Without Parish Council and community stakeholders to formulate and bring to fruition a joint Neighbourhood Plan recognising the opportunities that this process affords for local determination on future land use and development.

3. Philosophy and culture

3.1 Culture

The following values, expectations, attitudes and beliefs are deemed integral to everything the Council does and are shared by Councillors and employees alike:

3.1.1 Honesty and Integrity

The Council will strive for openness in its systems and processes so that stakeholders have confidence in its decision making arrangements and management processes. Members and officers will demonstrate a consistency of actions, values, expectations and outcomes founded on honesty and integrity.

3.1.2 Looking after the well being of the town

The Town Council is committed to improving the quality of life within the town and to inspiring pride within the community. By engaging with the community it serves; demonstrating initiative; and working with strategic partners; the Council will aim to enhance the town for current and future generations.

3.1.3 Treating People Fairly

The Council recognises the diversity of its community and seek to ensure that everyone has access to the services, information and opportunities they need. The Town Council values its employees and understands that they are key to providing

excellent service. Staff will have the opportunity to achieve their full potential and be empowered to add value to the Council and the wider community.

3.1.4 Proactivity and Immediacy

The Town Council will proactively strive to improve the service offering to meet and exceed the expectations of the community. Communication will be clear and courteous and will respond to residents' needs in a timely manner. The Town Council will seek to develop and deliver a strategic vision for Melksham which is aspirational and visionary but at the same time achievable and realistic.

3.2 Continuous improvement

The Town Council will always seek to improve the management and operation of the Council to ensure that it is efficient, well run, and provides best value services. With a philosophy founded on openness, honesty, transparency and accountability, the Council seeks to listen to and involve its residents and community to deliver a service that is perceived as high quality and value for money.

3.3 Effective Committee Structure

Decisions will be made by the appropriate committee depending upon the terms of reference within which the respective committee operates. Working Groups and Sub-committees may be formed as appropriate where issues are best considered through small, focused groups.

3.4 Staff, skills and capabilities

Councillors and staff have wide ranging skills, capabilities and aptitudes and these are used to the best possible effect in moving Melksham forward. Recruitment processes are aimed at ensuring that the right people are attracted to and feel part of the aims and ambitions of the Council. Investment is made in training and education for Councillors and staff members alike, with a particular emphasis on personal and professional development within the local government context.

3.5 Policies and Procedures

The Council has developed a comprehensive portfolio of policies and procedures that seek to create a conducive, positive and productive employment environment. Policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and updated and revised from time to time as deemed necessary.

3.6 Systems

Systems and procedures are kept under review by staff and committees and revised as necessary to ensure efficiency and effectiveness. Key processes are documented to ensure consistency of approach; flexibility of resource allocation; and clear audit trails. Information technology will be introduced where tangible benefits can be demonstrated to ensure that the Council maintains a streamlined and efficient approach to its activities, and exploits the opportunities afforded by quick, easy and inexpensive media technology.

4 Vision

The Town Council's vision is that:

The role of Melksham Town Council is to strengthen the sense of community, create and promote inclusivity, improve the quality of life for all people and help every individual to fulfil and exceed in their aspirations

This vision is supported by the following factors:

4.1 History and Heritage

The Town Council recognises that one of the town's greatest assets is its proud history and heritage. As an historic market town it had its origins as a royal estate at the time of the Norman Conquest and is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086. With an industrial heritage originally as a weaving town Melksham has over the years played host to once thriving rope making and dairy related enterprises and a Royal Air Force station which, at its zenith, accommodated over 10,000 personnel. In looking to seize opportunities that the future offers, the Town Council will have regard to the past and will aim to reflect and celebrate the town's history and tradition, including protecting and enhancing the town's conservation area.

Strategic Aim: To celebrate the history and heritage of Melksham and to move forward positively into the future

Strategy	Implementation process
History and heritage celebrated as a major asset of the town	Protect and enhance the conservation area
Moving into the future	Bold and imaginative thinking not restrained by a lack of ambition

4.2 Economic Development

Melksham Town Council aims to make a measurable difference to the quality of life of the town. The town centre sits at the very heart of the community and its appearance and prosperity generates civic pride and a sense of belonging promoting Melksham as a great place to live, work and visit. Major high street retailers and brand names will be welcomed recognising that this in itself serves to enhance the profile of the town.

In accordance with the principles of the Portas report, it is recognised that high streets are at the heart of towns and communities and that an investment in and creation of social capital will in turn generate economic capital. The town centre should provide spaces and places that people want to be in; a vibrant place that people choose to visit; and a destination in its own right. The Town Council will revitalise the Town Team concept and work with stakeholders to animate the town centre, creating and nurturing a unique place that is accessible, attractive and safe and that provides a pleasant place to shop and socialise. To this end, initiatives such as the Christmas Lights and Flower Town will be promoted and supported wherever possible thus enhancing the public realm and encouraging footfall from residents and visitors alike.

Strategic Aim: To promote Melksham as a welcoming, vibrant and prosperous place

Strategy	Implementation process
Improve the quality of life of Melksham, engendering a sense of belonging and civic pride, enhancing the profile of the town as a great place to live, work and visit	Encourage major high street retailers and promote involvement as key stakeholders through CSR initiatives
A vibrant attractive accessible and safe place that people choose to visit for retail, recreational and social activities	Work with stakeholders to animate the town centre Enhance the profile of the town
Encourage pride in belonging to a unique place	Support and promote community groups e.g Christmas lights, Town team and Bloom in Melksham.
Key role in the town's strategic development	Explore and progress community asset transfer initiatives Proactive involvement in generating a Joint Neighbourhood Plan Integral role within new Health and Well Being centre development and associated facilities.

4.3 Social and Recreational Offering

The Town Council will strive to promote community involvement through sports societies, clubs, voluntary groups and non profit making organisations. Emotional health and well being will be promoted through the support of the arts. A wealth of activities and performances take place in venues across the town creating a calendar of events all year, which the Town Council seeks to promote and support.

Efforts will continue to enhance the profile of the Assembly Hall and its offer, thereby increasing utilisation and promoting entertainment – including live performance and cinema screenings – that also serve to encourage the concept of a destination venue

Strategic Aim: To provide and encourage participation of activities and facilities for everyone

Strategy	Implementation process
High community involvement	Promote groups and clubs
Good emotional health and wellbeing	Support performance and arts activities
Enhanced profile of the Assembly Hall as a vital constituent of the social and recreational fabric of the town, catering to all demographics; a destination venue; and a valued asset and an accessible resource for the community	Provide an eclectic mix of events and activities that appeal to all Provide an eclectic mix of entertainment that will increase and diversify audiences Provide a sustainable, ongoing and established community cinema facility

	Attract commercial patronage for a wide range of events and functions Showcase the Assembly Hall as an attractive recreational venue with a customer focused hospitality team offering high quality and affordable entertainment.
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4.4 Safe, active and healthy society

Good local health provision will be promoted throughout the town and cycling, walking and public transport will be encouraged. Recreational open spaces and play areas will be protected and well maintained as a community benefit and the use of facilities within the town for sporting activity will be promoted where possible. The Town Council will endeavour to enhance the profile of the town as a sporting hub recognising the sporting facilities provided for the community at, for example, the prospective Health & well Being Centre; superb football and rugby facilities at Oakfields Stadium; cricket facilities at Melksham House; Park run at King George V park; active water sports on the River Avon; and the Skatepark.

The Town Council will seek to celebrate the opportunities for sport and physical activity within the community and encourage wider participation throughout the demographic. Play areas for children will be maintained and developed throughout the town with a particular focus on enhanced equipment provision in King George V Park including “green gym” facilities and a water play/splash pad amenity.

To promote a community where everyone feels secure, free from the fear of crime and antisocial behaviour and the effects of drug and alcohol misuse, the Town Council will continue to work closely with the Police (particularly the NPT) and CSG through measures such as CCTV, Storennet and the local youth network

Strategic Aim: To create and promote a safe, active and healthy society

Strategy	Implementation process
Physically and emotionally healthy	Encourage cycling, walking and sports activities including the Melksham Link initiative
Good local health provision	Active co-operation and collaboration with local medical practitioners
Enhanced profile of town as a sporting hub	Protect and maintain recreation spaces Encourage wider participation in sport and promote sports facilities in town: Health & Well Being Centre; football and rugby at Oakfields; water sports on the river; King George V Playing Field including Parkrun and Skatepark; Play areas
Safe community	Work with police, NPT, CSG and local Youth Network, Support CCTV initiatives

4.5 Community Engagement

Melksham Town Council strives to encourage a strong relationship with all stakeholders recognising the value of their respective contributions to the community. Facilitating and co-ordinating as appropriate, the Town Council will actively support community groups in delivering events, activities and services that provide local benefit and enjoyment.

The Town Council is fully committed to communicating, consulting and engaging with its residents and thereby building active trust and involvement with and within the community - working to create an inclusive and vibrant community where the needs and abilities of people are recognised and respected.

Strategic Aim: To proactively promote a sense of community and belonging

Strategy	Implementation process
Strong sense of community with a wide range of activities and services that provide local benefit and enjoyment	Support and facilitate community groups to deliver events and activities
An inclusive and vibrant community where needs and abilities of people are respected	Promote inclusivity
Trust and involvement with and within the community	Communicate and consult with residents

5. Assembly Hall

5.1 Introduction

The Assembly Hall represents the primary social and recreational amenity provided by the Town Council. One of the largest community halls in Wiltshire, the facility is an established and well loved part of the town's social fabric, though this provision comes at a price with its ongoing operational costs accounting for approximately 30% of the Town Council's annual expenditure.

5.2 Mission

Melksham's Assembly Hall is a unique, versatile and welcoming space. As a community facility, it aims to provide a flexible, multi use vibrant and valued social and recreational hub at the heart of the community it serves and thereby to improve the quality of life within the town.

5.3 Core Values:

5.3.1 The Assembly Hall will provide a versatile venue for a wide range of community centric events.

5.3.2 Accepting that a level of subsidy will be required to ensure its continued existence and ongoing viability, the Assembly Hall will strive to minimise the financial burden it represents to the Melksham tax payer.

5.3.3 The Assembly Hall will seek to provide an eclectic and diverse mix of entertainment that will enhance its value to the community as a local asset and as a destination venue.

5.3.4 Recognising that audiences and customers are the *raison d'être* for its continued existence, to emphasise a strong service mentality, ensuring that the customer experience is a good one and striving to continually improve it.

5.4 Overview

5.4.1 History

For over fifty years, the Assembly Hall has provided a venue for gatherings, events and activities from dances to conferences and fayres. Operated by West Wilts District Council until 2001, the threat of closure prompted the Town Council, supported by a community referendum, to take over the running of the Hall with effect from that time.

5.4.2 Facility

The Assembly Hall constitutes a large mixed use building with a bar, foyer and back stage space. With a proscenium arch stage; two dressing rooms; stage lighting; cinema quality projection and screen; digital state of the art sound system and audio loop the Hall is well equipped to host conferences/seminars, dinners, dances, wedding receptions, fund raising events, bazaars and fairs. The Hall has a Canadian ochre dance floor and can seat approximately 300 people in cabaret style for dining and dancing and 400 in a theatre style setting.

5.4.3 Cinema

The lack of a cinema within the town was specifically referred to as a weakness within the Melksham Area Community Strategy (2004-2014) document, and prior to the advent of the rural cinema White Horse Pictures Initiative (“WHPI”), the community was evidently underserved in respect of high quality film provision. The absence of a cinema facility (the previous cinema in the town - “The Maxine” - closed in 1965) has meant that those able to afford the travel costs have been enticed away from the town, their community, and the local economy, for cinematic entertainment, whilst those unable to afford or cope with the travel implications have simply been denied the opportunity.

The Town Council has embraced the opportunity for rural cinema through the WHPI and for the first time in a generation, residents have been able to enjoy film in their own locality. In addition to mainstream films, the ability to screen Saturday morning films with a children/family bent; and the initiative by the Seniors Forum to screen classics for a mature day time audience, has ensured that this is an accessible resource for the enjoyment of a wide range of the community. The “Movies at Melksham” brand has now become an established part of the social and recreational scene and adds significant value to the town’s cultural offer.

5.4.4 Alternative Content

Given the infrastructure installed to facilitate the WHPI and the Movies at Melksham brand, the potential was recognised to expand the offer to incorporate alternative content – the ability to screen a varied range of live and recorded entertainment such as sport, opera, musicals, ballet, and music performances.

In accord with the Assembly Hall's stated aim to provide an eclectic mix of quality entertainment for local audiences to enjoy, screenings have included ballet, opera, musicals and concerts. This has resulted in local audiences having the opportunity to enjoy live performances from the Royal Opera House and West End theatres together with spectacular international productions and contemporary pop concerts from locations across the globe.

5.4.5 Live Performance

In 2011 the decision was taken to pro actively facilitate and promote live entertainment at the Assembly Hall. Hitherto live entertainment had only been provided through events arranged by user groups, and it was perceived that the facility was underutilised and the community under served in this regard.

The Live at Melksham concept was launched in 2012 with the objectives of:

- Enhancing the social and recreational offer within the community
- Enhancing the profile of the Assembly Hall and town as a destination venue
- Generating an income stream that ultimately reduces the local tax burden

The concept sought to provide a variety of entertainment. Whilst this invariably generates low ticket income margins, it provides potential for secondary spend from which the Hall can benefit.

Following protracted negotiation the first artist to appear as part of the Live at Melksham offer was comedian Jon Richardson. A 400 ticket sell out performance was the precursor to further live entertainment featuring amongst others Marcus Brigstocke; the Royal Air Force Squadronaires; Lee Evans; Alan Carr; Jimmy Tarbuck; Josh Widdicombe and Des O'Connor.

However, whilst attempts have been made to ensure that the Assembly Hall is regarded as a potential national tour venue, particularly for comedy, the lack of infrastructure and facilities associated with a big theatre inevitably makes this a difficult ambition to achieve and sustain.

The provision of live musical entertainment has been afforded particular since 2016 in accordance with the aim to provide an eclectic mix of entertainment across a wider socio economic and socio demographic range

5.4.6 Community Focus

The Assembly Hall hosts a wide range of events and activities such as Rock and Roll dances; organ club recitals; sportsman's dinners; model car club racing; cultural talks and lectures; dinner dances; pantomimes and charity events. The scale and variety of events that the Assembly Hall is able to host adds to its uniqueness as a valued community asset, and the potential to exploit this still further, and attract additional patronage, will be a key goal within any plans for the Hall's future development.

5.5 Aims

Building on the mission statement and core values described above, the Assembly Hall has three core aims going forward:

- To be a vital constituent of the social and recreational fabric of the town by promoting and hosting an eclectic mix of events and activities
- To be a valued asset and an accessible resource for the community, at the heart of the community it serves
- To run as cost effectively as possible and generate income streams that will reduce the financial burden on the local tax payer

5.6 Objectives

The Assembly Hall will fulfil these aims by:

5.6.1 Hosting community activities and events with cross-demographic and cross-socio-economic appeal

The Hall will continue to provide a home for community based activities and events. Community (as opposed to commercial) hire rates will be available and financial support to hire the Hall will be made available through the Town Council's annual grants award process. The variety of community activities hosted within the Hall is evidenced by the many and varied current user groups which include: West Wilts Model Car Club; Seniors' Forum; Melksham & District Historical Association; Weightwatchers; North Wilts Fine & Decorative Arts Society; Melksham & District Gardeners' Society; and 2385 (Melksham) Squadron Air Training Corps.

5.6.2 Promoting an eclectic mix of live and screened live entertainment that will increase and diversify audiences

The Hall will continue to promote live entertainment in its own right and will provide a venue for user groups who stage entertainment related events which members of the

public are able to attend and enjoy. In all cases secondary spend revenues will provide an important income stream.

Whilst striving to be recognised as a venue for nationwide tours for comedy and speciality acts, “one off” performances (evidenced in the past by performances from such well known names by Monty Halls; Dick Strawbridge; and the RAF Squadronaires) will be explored and promoted where it is perceived that they will attract an audience and are economically viable.

Regular dances presented by the Melksham Rock ‘n Roll Club; Big Band concerts; and charity events in aid of organisations such as Help for Heroes; the Royal Air Forces Association; the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund and Wiltshire Air Ambulance have been held at the Hall and its continued usage in this vein will be encouraged.

5.6.3 Providing a sustainable, ongoing and established community cinema facility that will attract audiences throughout the demographic spectrum, thereby promoting social cohesion

The cinema facility and its role as an important element within the town’s social and recreational offer will continue. However it is perceived that whilst this will never be economically lucrative, cinema provision aligns with objectives identified within the Melksham Community Plan particularly in relation to leisure and community inclusion of young people and senior citizens.

Indeed, in this regard, the film festival aimed particularly at families and children in February 2013, allied to the popularity of Saturday morning screenings, suggests that a children centric audience exists within the community and that the cinema is a well received and valued entertainment asset. At the other end of the age spectrum the popularity of regular monthly film presentations by and for the Melksham Seniors’ Forum demonstrates that the cinema facility is well received by this demographic also.

5.6.4 Attracting commercial patronage of a versatile and flexible facility for a wide range of events and functions

The Assembly Hall provides a large and versatile space for a wide range of commercial functions. The Hall has been used for Police conferences; retailer induction seminars; conflict and safety management practical training sessions; Masonic dinners; Christmas and other celebratory parties, and sundry other activities and events. The lack of available breakout space is perceived to be a constraining factor in attracting further conference/commercial patronage will require consideration as part of any future development plans.

5.6.5 Showcasing the Hall as an attractive recreational venue with a customer focused hospitality team offering high quality but affordable entertainment, and raising the profile of the Hall as a destination venue for those living outside the immediate area.

The recruitment of a higher calibre facilities and hospitality Team in 2015/16 bodes well for the creation of a more professional and customer orientated perception, reinforcing the belief that it is fundamentally the quality of our people and the service they provide that underpins the character and added value of the service provided.

Renewed efforts will be made to market the Hall to business users emphasising the versatility and scope provided by the space that the Hall provides.

5.7 The Future

The Town Council has committed to progress the redevelopment of the Hall in order to provide a facility that will serve the community as a valuable asset for the next 40 to 50 years.

Wiltshire Council's decision in 2011 to commission a new community campus (now referred to as a Health & well Being Centre "H&WBC") for Melksham was welcomed by the Town Council who immediately recognised that the Assembly Hall with its social and recreational offer readily complemented the aims and aspirations of the H&WBC.

The proposition that the Assembly Hall (and potentially Town Council administrative facilities) could be accommodated within the Campus facility was initially explored but in the absence of sufficient meaningful definitive information to underpin a collaborative arrangement, the Town Council determined to progress the redevelopment of the Assembly Hall in situ.

The financial implications associated with redeveloping the facility on its current site are likely to be significant and servicing a loan debt of this magnitude will inevitably backwash onto the Melksham tax payer.

Significant preparatory work including feasibility studies and community consultation will need to be undertaken before moving to project and the decision on how to proceed, and the legacy that it will create for the community, is likely to be the biggest decision ever taken by the Town Council.

6 Strategic Context

There are a number of key areas that are likely to require priority focus during this Town Council's period of tenure:

6.1 Assembly Hall and Town Council administrative support

As described in 5.7 above, it will be incumbent upon the current Council to determine the scope of any redevelopment of the Assembly Hall. Whilst the project may not be completed during its tenure, the Council will seek to determine the way forward and commission the necessary works and associated expenditure by 2020.

6.2 Devolution of Services

Wiltshire Council's stated intention, given current financial pressures, to withdraw from the provision of some community services means that the Town Council will face significant challenges in respect of ongoing service provision and associated community asset transfers during the tenure of this Council. In this regard, the Town Council has pro actively indicated that it is prepared to enter into a dialogue with Wiltshire Council in relation to the provision of facilities and associated responsibilities. Whilst further information is awaited from Wiltshire Council, the Town Council has already taken over responsibility for floral planting and maintenance in locations hitherto tended by the unitary authority. In addition, following Wiltshire Council's decision to withdraw from public convenience service provision, the Town Council has taken over responsibility for the Market Place toilets.

Assuming responsibility for play areas and equipment within the town is seen as a key goal given the desire to ensure the ongoing provision of active play for children, and the inevitable implications associated with Wiltshire Council's decision to decommission damaged play equipment and, if necessary, close play areas (see 6.6 below). In addition the maintenance of bus shelters, and supplementary street cleaning; grass cutting and roadsweeping activities will all be actively explored and progressed where economically viable in order to protect and enhance amenities and the public realm and thereby providing tangible benefits for the community.

6.3 King George V Park

As part of the aim to devolve services to Town and Parish Councils (6.2 above), it is anticipated that Wiltshire Council will seek to asset transfer King George V ("KGV") to the Town Council. Given that the area is held and managed in Trust, there are a number of stakeholders such as Fields in Trust, Sport England and the Charities Commission that may need to be involved and in agreement with any such transfer.

It is recognised that KGV provides a vital green space and recreation offer within the town, and that the potential exists to enhance this across a wide demographic. Whilst it is perceived that this valuable community amenity would be better developed and administered under the auspices of the Town Council, clearly significant financial implications will ensue. In this regard, Council will consider whether options should be explored to determine if infrastructure, notably the Cricket Pavilion, might be used for alternative income generation purposes that would serve to offset the financial liabilities associated with the management and maintenance of the park.

Also within the context of King George V Park, Wiltshire Council's decision to close the paddling pool in 2015 created an untenable situation. Unwilling to tolerate the existence of a derelict and decaying facility within the town's principal park, the Town Council took the

proactive step of filling in the paddling pool and creating a young children's play area in August 2017. The paddling pool was a well used and much loved facility however and the opportunities it provided for water play has been sadly missed. In this vein and subject to agreement on the ongoing management of KGV, the Town Council has committed to explore and progress the installation of a state of the art splash pad within the park.

6.4 Spiritualist Church Garden

The Trustees of the former Spiritualist Church in King Street have indicated their desire to gift the garden to the rear of the building to the Town Council to be retained, in perpetuity, as an area of quiet contemplation for the community to enjoy.

The Town Council has indicated that it views this prospect favourably, albeit harbouring concerns about the level of financial liability it would inherit were it to take over the amenity. In this regard the Trustees are commissioning repair and maintenance works to minimise the financial implications at a potential point of transfer. This notwithstanding, if the opportunity to take over the garden crystallises, the Town Council must decide whether this potential community asset will add value to the green space offer within the town and, therefore, whether it wishes to assume ownership of this amenity.

6.5 Riverside Club

The Trustees of the Riverside Club have approached the Town Council with regard to the possibility of the Town Council taking over guardianship and day to day running of the club.

It is apparent that the Club fulfils a vital role within the social fabric of the community particularly in relation to senior citizens; whilst the aging nature of the current trustees allied to the dearth of interest from younger persons to assume trustee roles casts doubt over the sustainability of the current managerial and administrative arrangements. However, whilst the club appears to operate successfully in its current guise, the implications for the Town Council were it to take over responsibility for the facility will need to be carefully and critically assessed.

6.6 Play Areas

Wiltshire Council has already indicated that lack of funding means that damaged equipment in play areas will not be repaired and if town or parish councils do not fund the repair then the equipment will be withdrawn. The ultimate conclusion of this process is that children's play areas will cease to exist.

In order to mitigate the effects of this the Town Council has made an ongoing financial provision to fund the repair of broken play equipment which will serve as an expedient measure in the short term. This is purely a "sticking plaster" initiative however pending the completion of the community asset transfer process envisaged in 6.2 above. In the interim the Town Council will proactively attempt to intervene and provide funding where possible to repair play area stock that is liable to be decommissioned and thereby prevent the closure of play areas.

6.7 Melksham Link

The proposed Melksham link to join the Wilts and Berks Canal to the Kennet and Avon Canal via the River Avon through Melksham is recognised as having enormous potential benefits. By providing the market place for a thriving leisure and recreation economy, and facilitating extensive environmental benefits in terms of sustainable transport, cycling and walking, the proposed canal link provides significant opportunities for the local community.

The creation of the canal is defined as a core policy within the Core Strategy however the significant funding implications mean that, in reality, the link will only come to fruition through enabling development. The prospect of c.700 houses in the Berryfield area as part of phase 1 and the potential for development in a waterside setting through the town as part of phase 2 will demand that the Town Council must determine its stance and, if deemed appropriate, demonstrate its support, in relation to the proposals.

6.8 Planning Development, CIL and Community Benefit Monies

The Town Council is committed to working collaboratively with Melksham Without Parish Council in creating a Joint Neighbourhood Plan for the Melksham community area. The Plan will seek to identify sites and land use implications for residential, industrial and infrastructure development until 2026 in the first instance. If the Plan passes examination and is approved by the community at referendum it will be adopted by the Planning Authority as part of the community areas development plan and will serve to control the scale, nature and type of approved planning applications going forward.

The CIL system allows councils in England and Wales to raise funds for infrastructure to support an area's development by imposing a charge per square metre of development though the size of the levy assigned to Town or parish councils will be contingent on the existence of a Neighbourhood Plan (25% if a Neighbourhood Plan is formally adopted or 15% if not). Whether or not the Neighbourhood Plan is approved, the Town Council will be entitled to a proportion of the community infrastructure levy ("CIL") charged in respect of approved development.

Moreover, the prospect of community benefit fund monies emanating from the development of a solar farm within the vicinity will provide an income stream for a finite (up to twenty five years) period. In order to optimise the impact of these payments the Council will seek to ensure that available monies are apportioned and allocated to complement the aims and objectives identified within this Corporate Plan.

7 Strategic Direction - Missions and Objectives

The Town Council's strategic direction for the duration of its current tenure is governed by a series of key mission statements which are underpinned by deliverable objectives. The Council will monitor and measure its performance against the achievement of these objectives on an ongoing basis.

7.1 Mission: To work for children and young people, providing support in the delivery of dedicated open access activities and facilities within the town.

Objectives:

- To develop and support a network of organisations working with children and young people in the community
- To support the identification and provision of a suitable dedicated open access youth centre to be available for use prior to the closure of the current Canberra facility.
- To increase facilities for children and young people in the town and enhance the delivery of services for them
- To maintain and expand the provision of summer holiday activities recognising the aims and aspirations for a safe active and healthy society described in section 4.4
- To work with partner organisations to enhance the offer for children and young people within the town encouraging their active involvement and engagement, as the future guardian's of tomorrow's Melksham and key to its future success, in civic and community decision making and events.

7.2 Mission: To work for an age friendly society with an active and engaged senior community, helping to prevent social isolation and promoting social inclusion, recognising the role and contribution of those who may be disadvantaged on the basis of their age.

Objectives:

- To recognise and celebrate the wealth of knowledge and experience that senior members of our community bring to our town
- To develop a network of organisations working with senior and less abled members of the community
- To support and facilitate opportunities for senior citizens to participate in a social environment recognising the potential afforded by regular activities.
- To promote the development of skills and access to resources across the senior community enabling them to improve their wellbeing and quality of life.
- To encourage and promote the concept of Melksham becoming an age friendly town.

7.3 Mission: To secure the future of The Assembly Hall for the long-term benefit of the town, ensuring it is a versatile and flexible space that will accommodate and complement a wide range of community and commercial activities.

Objectives:

- To develop the structure and fabric of the Assembly Hall to unlock the potential for its future growth.
- To maintain and improve the Assembly Hall, working with users and residents to ensure the hall remains as a community facility well into the future.

7.4 Mission: To promote a healthier lifestyle by ensuring that local people have facilities that are accessible for all, including leisure and recreation, sport, play, just enjoying the ambience of an open space including high quality, safe play areas for children and young people.

Objectives:

- To ensure an adequate provision of equipment and facilities for all age groups and abilities
- To progress and complete the transfer of responsibility for parks and play areas from Wiltshire Council to the Town Council with all possible speed.
- Where necessary with partners, ensure, where possible, that all play areas and equipment are safe and well maintained.
- To create a long term vision for King George V Playing Fields working with the local community and other partners.

7.5 Mission: To enhance the cleanliness and appearance of the town to create a welcoming and inviting environment, generating civic pride and promoting the town as a pleasant place to visit, live, work and play.

Objectives:

- To fund additional resource, both internal and external, to supplement the streetscene and highways cleaning activities provided by Wiltshire Council
- To engage with, support and encourage community groups and volunteers working to improve the environment within our town.
- To establish closer links with partner authorities to ensure that the environmental services provided by each authority complement each other to optimise the benefits provided to the community.
- To work with partners to improve and reduce the streetscene clutter
- To engage with and support businesses to enhance and improve their frontages across the town

7.6 Mission: To support the community by working with local community organisations and groups, and partner authorities to improve the town and enrich the experience for its residents and visitors alike.

Objectives:

- To proactively engage with community groups, providing information and encouraging participation in relevant decision making scenarios
- To provide grant funding to community and voluntary groups to support their work and efforts in providing activities, facilities and benefits for the town and its residents.

- To work with Melksham Without Parish Council to develop mutually important initiatives such as the Neighbourhood Plan, recreational open spaces and public facilities to a conclusion.
- To encourage employment opportunities and the economic vibrancy and well being of the town.
- To support cultural and community events that add vibrancy and variety to the town's social calendar