

SAFETY AND WELLBEING IN MELKSHAM AND ITS COMMUNITY AREA

January 2021

1. Melksham Town Council has been encouraged by a number of Wiltshire organisations to re-examine the potential for CCTV provision. At a Full Council meeting of the Town Council, members agreed to establish a CCTV Working Group. Subsequently, the Town Council's Economic Development Manager was asked to assume the role of lead officer.
2. The lead officer is grateful to the Melksham Area Board for its encouragement to examine and develop this project. A 'broad church' approach is being taken to bringing the working group together. It is developing and remains open to anyone who expresses interest in its work. This, of course, also includes the Community Engagement Manager for Melksham, as well as members of the Melksham Area Board, who were the first to be invited, given their early encouragement and engagement. Other early invitees included a representative from Wiltshire Police, Melksham Without Parish Council, the Melksham Older People's Champion, and the Secretary of Melksham Pub Watch.
3. An enhanced and more comprehensive CCTV system for Melksham and surrounding areas has long been discussed and some provision is in place. Such a system has potential to offer enhanced safety and reassurance to residents of the town as well as those visiting from the wider Community Area, resulting in higher levels of perceived safety and wellbeing. Crucially, such a CCTV system will also assist Wiltshire Police in preventing and solving crime. If there is identified need, a CCTV system could also potentially provide monitoring to problem areas across the community area leading back to a central hub, either as permanent installs or portable rapid deployment systems.
4. At the first meeting of the group, in December, the lead officer advised that the first, crucial stage in discussions revolved around the establishment of need. Unless need could be established, a CCTV system was not warranted and would be difficult to fund. This was accepted and the initial work of the group has revolved around this issue.
5. By the time of the second meeting of the group, earlier this month, detailed evidence of need and a strong supporting recommendation were forthcoming from Wiltshire Police, a draft, staged project plan had been produced and a Stage 1 (evidencing need) report was underway. Whilst the group still await contributions in this respect from Melksham Without Parish Council [meeting on 15 Feb] and Melksham Pub Watch, the reports from Wiltshire Police are considered significant and crucial evidential documents moving forward. This gave the group the confidence to begin preparations for the next stage. In this respect, further members of the Working Group have been recruited – the Amenities Team Manager at Melksham Town Council [who has experience of procuring and deploying CCTV systems] and Councillor Stefano Patacchiola, Melksham Without Parish Council [a practicing Registered Independent Security Consultant with the Association of Security Consultants with specialist CCTV knowledge]. Sgt James Twyford, the author of the Police reports, is also advising Melksham Without Parish Council members at their meeting on 15 February. Copies of the Police reports have been supplied to the Melksham Community Engagement Manager. In addition, 2 specialist Police Officers have been nominated to keep a watching brief and be available to step in and advise the group as and when necessary – the Tactical Crime Prevention Officer and the Design-out Crime Officer.
6. The lead officer was delighted to receive the following, recent endorsement from Wiltshire Police: *"..... thanks to you for having the expertise and motivation to start this Project off with some good direction. It would be such a huge benefit to the Town to get this off the ground and the Working Group seems to have a good breadth of expertise, all credit to you for that. More than happy to help any time as new things crop up. I'm going to seek expert opinion from our Crime Prevention Officers too, as we get into the middle stages and we're looking more at the specifics. Hopefully they can provide a good bit of advice around the tactical side of deployment and scope."*
7. Clearly examining and evaluating the current, small, provision, then scoping, specifying and costing the overall requirements is the second, key preliminary and preparatory stage. It is this next crucial step we seek to fund now so further stage capital works are appropriately executed, achieve required outcomes, and offer value for money. We believe that a great deal of this can be done in house, which is why the budget for this work is modest. Given that the benefits encompass a greater geographical area than Melksham Town itself, i.e. the wider community area, we seek the support of the Area Board for 50% of the cost, to match the contribution of the applicant – i.e. £2500 contribution in each case.

David McKnight
Economic Development Manager
Melksham Town Council
January 2021.