

## A Business Proposal to amalgamate Melksham's Blue Pool with the Assembly Hall

### **1. The Issue**

Melksham is a growing market town with a multi-cultural and diverse population. Other market towns within Wiltshire and North Somerset enjoy the benefit of entertainment facilities. They also have museums or heritage centres which are frequented by the public. This attracts tourism and gives these towns a cultural and historical identity.

There is an opportunity to acquire the redundant Blue Pool from Wiltshire Council (WC) and use the incumbent space to a) provide a museum, b) provide a much-enhanced Assembly Hall, with larger entrance, adjacent car parking, better toilet facilities and a cafeteria/pop-up bar which would alleviate most of the congestion around the current bar and toilet facilities. There is also further scope to provide additional spaces which could be hired and provision of a large storage area for Melksham Town Council (MTC) to use.

### **2. Options Analysis**

#### **a) Do nothing:**

(i) Advantages:

Money could be saved by MTC and the onus would be on WC to sell off or demolish the blue pool.

(ii) Disadvantages:

The Blue Pool and Assembly Hall are inextricably linked and demolishing the Blue Pool may have structural implications for the Assembly Hall. Also, the opportunity would be lost to create something which could really benefit the people of Melksham and surrounding areas.

**THIS OPTION IS NOT RECOMMENDED**

#### **b) Do Minimal:**

(i) Advantages:

The roof in the Assembly Hall could be patched up along with some redecoration. This would maintain the integrity of the building.

(ii) Disadvantages:

This would not provide a museum and it would not provide a better entrance, additional carparking, additional reception rooms and all the other facilities (MTC storage space, cafeteria, suitable toilets) to fulfil the requirement.

**THIS OPTION IS NOT RECOMMENDED**

**c) Build a 'bespoke' Facility to replace the Assembly Hall:**

(i) Advantages:

The venue could be 'purpose built' with an architectural design. It could be situated in a multitude of locations with sufficient parking, changing rooms, kitchen facilities, bar, stage, lighting and sound-proofing. It could be constructed to cater for both small and large events.

(ii) Disadvantages:

The cost would be exorbitant at a time when the country is facing a cost-of-living crisis and there is a genuine concern that the project would be deemed unaffordable and would be postponed and eventually mothballed leaving Melksham with no viable venue should the Assembly Hall be closed. Melksham would also be without an entertainment centre for a considerable period forcing its constituents to go out of town for their entertainment. The need for a museum would not be met.

**THIS OPTION IS NOT RECOMMENDED**

**d) Expedite the wishes of the FoMAH group and fully investigate the plausibility of amalgamating the Assembly Hall with the Blue Pool:**

(i) Advantages:

This will maximise the potential of the Assembly Hall in terms of size, access, parking, reception space, wheelchair access, bar/lounge and toilet facilities. It will provide a museum and other reception areas thereby raising the profile of the building, making it even more appealing to users of the hall and also repurpose part of the Blue Pool which has lain dormant for a considerable time.

(ii) Disadvantages:

This would still constitute a major financial undertaking for MTC mitigated somewhat by not now purchasing Melksham House and also having a solution for amenities storage. Should large scale renovation take place on the Assembly Hall/Blue Pool there would be a certain amount of disruption while building work and refurbishment was conducted. However, this would potentially only affect daytime events as those taking place in the evening would fall outside construction working hours.

**This is the preferred option**

### 3. Proposal:

In order to fully explore Option d), it is FoMAH's recommendation to MTC that professional consultation should be procured in order to obtain Rough Order of Magnitude (ROM) costings and timescales for the prospective work required to amalgamate the Assembly Hall and Blue Pool and provide all the plumbing, electrical and refurbishment required to provide suitable facilities, demolish the wall surrounding the Assembly Hall and provide a tarmac parking area for use of the Assembly Hall, Town Hall and museum. These recommendations would form the technical input into a formal commitment case where MTC would justify funding provision. It would also form part of the requirement which would be fed into the formal tender process. This technical input would draw upon the following expertise:

- a structural engineer to assess the integrity of the entire building and produce a report
- an architect to peruse the structural engineer's report along with FoMAH's outline plans and produce an architectural design.
- both these deliverables would form part of the tender documentation along with the SOR (Statement Of Requirement).

### 4. Procurement Route:

It is FoMAH's recommendation that MTC seriously consider using Crown Commercial Services (CCS) in order to tender for the extensive work required to expedite Option d). The advantage of using CCS (which is available for all publicly funded procurements) is that they have frameworks with prequalified Suppliers already in place. It would cost MTC nothing to use CCS and they can provide the commercial expertise required to issue tender documentation, providing the necessary Core Terms, along with incumbent Framework Schedules, Joint Schedules and Call-Off Schedules relevant to this particular procurement. Having accessed the CCS website it would appear that Framework RM6242 (Construction Professional Services DPS) which is available until 02/11/2025 would be the most suitable for this particular procurement. Please check out the following link [Construction Professional Services DPS - CCS \(crowncommercial.gov.uk\)](https://www.crowncommercial.gov.uk) which provides details of the Framework and tells you how to register as a Buyer. We also suggest that you watch the following information video which gives you a good insight into what is covered on this framework [watch our RM6242 customer webinar and information video.](#)

### 5. In Conclusion

FoMAH is of the opinion that MTC must act quickly to acquire the Blue Pool from WC. Once that acquisition has been made a project plan can be initiated with ROM (Rough Order of Magnitude) costings and timescales and a Stakeholder map can be formulated so that appropriate interest, expertise and ownership is established at the outset. Realistic project timelines can then be instigated once the contract award has been made to the successful bidder(s). MTC may also want to give some consideration as to whether it wants to break the workload into 2 discrete packages:

Work Package One: External works; demolition of the surrounding wall and removal of the concrete slabs. Provision of a carpark with appropriate signage, tarmac area, with parking spaces allocated including wider spaces for Disabled vehicles.

Work Package Two: All the internal structural, electrical, plumbing, refurbishment, fire, health and safety aspects to make the combined facility meet legal requirements.