

**MINUTES of the Annual Parish Meeting of Melksham Without
Parish Council held on Monday 27th April 2026 at 7.00pm
At Melksham Rugby Club, Oakfields, Eastern Way, Melksham, SN12 7GU**

Present: John Glover (Chair), David Pafford (Vice Chair), Alan Baines, John Doel, Martin Haffenden, Mark Harris, Tony Hemmings, Anne Sullivan, Peter Richardson, and Richard Wood.

Officers: Teresa Strange (Clerk), Marianne Rossi (Finance & Amenities Officer) and Fiona Dey (Parish Officer)

In attendance: Wiltshire Councillors Nick Holder (Bowerhill) and Andrew Griffin (Melksham Without West & Rural). Wiltshire Councillor Phil Alford (Melksham Without North & Shurnhold) was due to provide his report; however, he had to leave prior to the start of the meeting due to prior commitments. A written version of Councillor Alford's report is included in the Annual Parish booklet.

52 Members of public

1. Welcome, Housekeeping and Apologies

Councillor Glover warmly welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the fire evacuation procedures in the event of a fire.

Apologies were received from Councillor Blackham, Councillor Franks and Wiltshire Councillor Alford.

Councillor Chris Griffiths was not present.

2. Chair's report on the work of the Council during the year.

Councillor Glover gave his report of the work of the parish council during 2025/26 (**Appendix 1**). He thanked council staff, councillors, and volunteers for their continued work supporting parish services and facilities and noted recent changes in council membership. He explained that the 2026/27 precept has increased by 6.1% to address inflation and to continue investment in local amenities, grants, and community support, including services for older residents. The council has actively managed planning applications, often opposing speculative developments, while supporting the updated Neighbourhood Plan and progressing projects such as improvements at Shurnhold Fields. Ongoing priorities include asset maintenance, emergency planning, and the delayed rollout of real-time bus information systems, alongside continued support for community initiatives.

3. Reports from the Wiltshire Councillors for the Parish

i. Wiltshire Councillor Nick Holder (Bowerhill) - Appendix 2:

Councillor Holder highlighted that Melksham Without Parish Council is widely regarded as an exemplar and plays a strong role in supporting residents, particularly on planning issues. He raised concerns about unplanned development, especially in Bowerhill, but noted successful outcomes where residents worked with the council to influence decisions. Examples included securing a safer construction traffic route at Maitland Place and protecting land at Bader Park from development. He emphasised

the importance of residents engaging in a future Neighbourhood Plan review to help identify and safeguard Local Green Spaces.

ii. **Wiltshire Councillor Phil Alford (Melksham Without North & Shurnhold)**

As detailed above, Councillor Alford had sent his apologies for having to leave the meeting before giving his report. His report has been provided under **Appendix 3** in the Annual Parish Booklet.

iii. **Wiltshire Councillor Andrew Griffin (Melksham Without West & Rural) - Appendix 4**

Councillor Griffin explained that as well as his role on Wiltshire Council he is a Melksham Town Councillor. He highlighted that despite differences between the communities, it is essential to work collaboratively across Melksham Without, Melksham Town and Wiltshire Council for the benefit of the wider area - as demonstrated by the joint Neighbourhood Plan. Recent planning appeals, along with the proposed withdrawal and restart of the Wiltshire Local Plan (unlikely to be delivered for at least 18 months), have reduced the strength of the Neighbourhood Plan in resisting speculative, unplanned development. In the meantime, it is vital to strengthen how the other Melksham Neighbourhood Plan policies are applied. We must continue to work to influence planning conditions and maximise developer contributions to support key community infrastructure such as community centres, play areas and green spaces.

iv. **Richard Rogers, Strategic Engagement and Partnership Officer, Melksham Community Area – Appendix 5**

Richard provided a summary of the purpose and work of the Area Boards. He went on to promote the new Wiltshire Community Lottery, explaining that local community groups, organisations and clubs can sign up from today to take part.

Each group will have its own webpage to promote itself, and when people purchase tickets they can nominate which group they wish to support. Of every £1 spent, 50p will be given to the chosen group.

He expressed the hope that the lottery will generate additional funding for the local community.

4. Update on the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2

Councillor Pafford as former Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group apologised that, contrary to his expectations last year, he needed to speak again regarding the Neighbourhood Plan (NHP).

The NHP was adopted on 4 August 2025. The following day, Wiltshire Council's Strategic Planning Committee refused an application for 300 houses at Snarlton Farm, which had been recommended for approval by officers. This was seen as supporting the strength of the NHP. However, the developer appealed and the decision has been called in by the Secretary of State, and a decision is still awaited following hearings held in January.

A separate appeal for 70 houses at Woodrow Road was approved despite strong local opposition. The decision was based largely on Wiltshire Council's lack of a five-year housing land supply (currently 2.42 years) and the absence of an up-to-date Local Plan, which inspectors of the plan have indicated should be withdrawn or would be rejected.

This creates a difficult context for the NHP, as it is intended to align with the Local Plan. David expressed concern that housing shortfalls are leading to approval of speculative developments and emphasised the need to continue opposing unplanned proposals.

He highlighted that the NHP covers a wide range of policies beyond housing, including green spaces, heritage, transport and community wellbeing.

Residents were encouraged to engage with the planning process by reviewing and commenting on applications via the Wiltshire Council planning portal. Melksham Without Parish Council considers applications every three weeks and seeks to influence decisions, with community input being key to this process.

5. Presentation from Age UK Wiltshire on Melksham Community Support – Appendix 6

Sara Thomson gave a short presentation about the services provided by Melksham Community Support Service which is jointly funded by Melksham Without Parish Council and Melksham Town Council. She can be contacted on 01225 809265.

Sara also highlighted that Age UK run a Fitness and Friendship group held at Bowerhill Village Hall every 2 weeks and offer a Wellbeing Check with Meal service.

6. Introduction to new Melksham Police Sergeant Charly Chilton

Charly Chilton introduced herself as the new Neighbourhood Policing Sergeant for Melksham and provided an update on recent work addressing issues relating to e-bikes and drug offences. She emphasised the importance of the public reporting incidents to the police and noted that she and her team are happy to visit local organisations on request.

7. Presentation from the Bobby Van Trust on Top Tips for Crime Prevention in the home

Vincent Logue gave a short presentation on the work of the Bobby Van Trust and shared some top tips for crime prevention in the home. They can be contacted at: BobbyVan@wbvt.org

8. Presentation from St John's Ambulance on how to use a Community Access Defibrillator

Andy Freestone gave a short demonstration of how to access and use a community access defibrillator and to perform CPR. He offered to visit local organisations and groups on request to provide a more detailed training session.

In Melksham Without, the parish council's community access defibrillators are located at:

- The New Inn, Berryfield

- Berryfield Village Hall, Berryfield
- The Pilot, Bowerhill
- Bowerhill Sports Field
- Pathfinder Way, Bowerhill
- Bowerhill Village Hall
- Whitley Reading Rooms
- Shaw Village Hall
- St Barnabas Church, Beanacre

Thanks were extended to the volunteers who check the defibrillators each week.

9. Comment and question time

A member of the public asked when the Parish Steward would be available again.

The Clerk explained that the Parish Stewards are employed by Wiltshire Council to carry out small-scale, discretionary highway maintenance, focusing on local priorities. As the service is discretionary, the Stewards are not always available due to other highways priorities – at present the Parish Stewards are focussed on pot-hole repair. The parish council do not have a timeline for when they will return to the parish support but confirmed that the service has not been discontinued.

10. To present Grant Aid cheques to and receive latest news from local organisations and groups

The Chair and Vice Chair presented Grant Aid cheques to those groups and organisations who had been awarded a grant, having provided a service which benefitted the residents of the parish.

The Chairman invited groups and organisations to say a few words whilst receiving their grant cheques, with representatives from all the groups thanking the parish council for their support and providing an explanation of the services they provided and what they would be spending their grant funding on.

Written reports from Organisations and Groups in the parish – Appendix 7

The following reports were noted:

Action Groups

BASRAG (Berryfield and Semington Road Action Group)

BRAG (Bowerhill Residents Action Group)

CAWS (Community Action: Whitley & Shaw)

Village Halls

Berryfield Village Hall

Bowerhill Village Hall

Whitley Reading Rooms

Groups and Organisations

that meeting space administered by GoodNews Church

Bowerhill Pre-School

Group Five

Wiltshire and Bath Air Ambulance Charity

Age UK Wiltshire
Beyond Dementia (formerly Alzheimer's Support)
Wiltshire Search and Rescue Team
Friends of Giffords Surgery
St John Ambulance Devizes and Central Wiltshire Network
Families Out Loud
Melksham Foodbank and Lifeline CIO
Melksham Food & River Festival
Shaw & Whitley Community Hub Ltd
Melksham Carnival
Melksham Remembers
Melksham Gardeners' Society
Shaw & Whitley Garden Club
Melksham WI
SixtyPlus
Corsham Cricket Club
Melksham and Corsham Gateway Club
Bowerhill Ladies
Shaw and Whitley Art Group
Melksham Oak Community School

Meeting finished at 9.00pm

Signed
Annual Council Meeting, 18th May 2026