

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of Melksham Without Parish Council held on Monday, 17th March 2008 at Rachel Fowler Centre, at 7p.m.

Present: Parish Council: Cllrs. Mike Mills (Chair); Cllrs. Richard Wood; Alan Baines; Elizabeth Bean; Rolf Brindle; Gregory Coombes; John Glover:

District Council and County Council:- Cllr. Roy While.

Members of the Community: Inspector Cullop (Wiltshire Constabulary) Ms Judith Billingham (WCC Road Safety Manager); Mr Andrew Matthews, head teacher of Bowerhill School; Mr. John Hamley (Melksham Rail Development Group, Reading Rooms and Whitley Players); Bob Brownrigg (Whitley Players and Whitley Reading Rooms).

1/ Welcome and Apologies: The Council Chair, Cllr. Mike Mills, welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Cllrs Ruth Gillings, Don Millard, Chris Holmes; District Cllrs. Richard Wiltshire and Ron Eaton.

2/ Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 2007: Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday, 19th March, 2007 were confirmed and signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

3/ Chair's Report: The Council Chair, Cllr. Mike Mills gave a report of the work of the Council during the year (*See Appendix attached.* The Chair ended his report by asking for a date for a meeting with MSK to discuss the office accommodation, and informed the meeting there had been a request from the PCT to present the petition for Melksham Minor Injuries Unit to them at the Melksham Town Council meeting. The Chair said they would do so, but that MWPC wished to present the petition to the full PCT Board at their next meeting on 15th April. The Chair informed the Council that Bowerhill Sports Field Changing rooms were all sealed up with Warning Signs for Asbestos, as on inspection, the WCC officers had found asbestos and closed the site. Arrangements were to be made to clear the asbestos but the Youth Club and Changing rooms could be shut for up to six weeks.

The Chair asked for volunteers for Tree Planting. He also congratulated Mary Jarvis, who was in her 25th year as Clerk to Melksham Without Parish Council.

4/ County Councillor Roy While: The Chair invited Cllr While to give a verbal report. Cllr While explained that he was a big supporter of the new School at Woolmore Farm, and the opening up of new leisure facilities which were a big opportunity for Melksham residents. However, Melksham residents need to have a "big Voice" as the Unitary authority would have restricted resources, e.g. Melksham and Castle Place Centres were the only Recreation and Leisure centres going forward, all others were on the back burner, so we need to fight for it.

Bowerhill had everything thrown at it this year, with the PFI scheme at Blenheim, but had won the battle. The Gompels expansion at Bowerhill, landscaping and traffic calming were still in dispute, so he could not make any comments. Cllr While said the District Council were in opposition to the Council Tax rise, they wanted 2%, not 4%, the idea was to halt the increase in council tax above the inflation rate, year or year.

The judicial review was dismissed, as he never doubted it would be, but it was a shame all the effort was not spent on future plans.

Cllr While stated he agreed with Cllr Mills that the work load will increase as the Unitary Authority comes in, and it may well mean that we need to take a closer look at resources. He had always been in favour of a Unitary Council, bringing in Community Boards composed of members of the new authority working closely with partners. We will need to have a clear identity for bidding for resources as this community will be one of 20, and we will have to "gee up" to win resources.

Cllr While continued to explain that the new school at Woolmore Farm was definitely going ahead, though there had been a planning error. It would only be delayed a matter of 4 – 6 weeks, as the paperwork was not completed as it should have been, therefore lawyers were involved.

Cllr. Wood inquired if the person responsible for the error had been reprimanded as it was a major error. Cllr. While was unable to answer that.

Cllr Coombes made a point to note that Councillors should only receive a reward when they turn up for meetings.

The Clerk asked Cllr. While questions about the changes in Planning notification. Cllr. While replied that he, and the Cabinet, had made a strong complaint about the changes. The Chair explained that with regard to the Gompels planning application, the WWDC planning department should notify more people, not less.

5/ Shaw School Traffic Problems, County Highways Response:- Judith Billingham Road Safety Manager, Education. Ms Billingham explained that there was a mechanism for dealing with the issues of traffic and that is the Traffic Plan, and that Shaw school were being assisted to write a traffic plan. This will then be submitted for funding. The travel plan is to help reduce car traffic, and increase walking. She said it is busy, but it is not a road safety issue. It is perceived as dangerous, but is not, as there were no accidents in five years and none at school time. The school are also considering changing the school arrival and home times in conjunction with the parents. At the moment, there are about 100 children coming by car, and most live within a mile of the School.

Cllr Mills inquired about a walking bus. Ms Billingham replied that it was an idea which could be used, and they would check it out and advise on routes. They would also provide training and fluorescent jackets. The Chair suggested the parents could park at Shaw Hall and walk through from there. Ms Billingham replied that it would be a good idea for the children to come up with suggestions for prizes or rewards to encourage them to walk

Cllr Glover commented that the traffic lights and signal times at the Shaw traffic lights seem to cause a problem and asked if anything could be done. Ms Billingham thought something has been done, but could not comment on that. Cllr Wood inquired if a second pedestrian crossing would help. Ms Billingham said it could be an option, if it was suggested in the school travel plan, but it was unusual to have one in an area like Shaw, let alone two. The Chair informed that the plan for Woolmore Farm has two pedestrian crossing. Ms Billingham explained that there were two because it was a main A road. Cllr Baines explained that it would be good to have a further crossing for Whitley pedestrians as crossing currently was really for Shaw pedestrians. It would also help for Whitley bus passengers. He suggested it could be at a distance from the school, i.e. Middle/Top Lane.

The headteacher of Bowerhill school, Mr. Andrew Matthews informed that he has done a questionnaire for their Traffic plan, and the main reason people don't want to walk, is because the roads are so busy. He explained that the traffic calming at Halifax road has made a difference. However, parents felt they needed to know that the children had reached school safely, therefore that is a registration issue. Cllr Coombes commented that he had lived on Corsham Road for 45 years, but had no confidence in a walking bus. He also explained that working mums would have to walk to and from school, then get in a car to drive to work, thus he suggested, they would just drive to school in the first place. Ms Billingham was sure the school would welcome the parish council's input. Cllr Glover said Melksham Without Parish Council should get involved and help before the travel plan was made.

6/ Wiltshire Annual Policing – Inspector David Cullop: Inspector Cullop commented on the implementation of the Neighbourhood Policing Teams which he had talked about last year. It is now happening nationally in April, so Melksham was a year ahead. A Shaw/ Whitley idea for contact boxes is now going countrywide. Inspector Cullop explained he had been in a meeting all that day, to see how to meet the needs of the Unitary Council, and how tasking groups work well with community involvement. There is nothing like it in Wiltshire's 19 other areas.

Inspector Cullop mentioned last year's minutes, when the Clerk had raised concerns over telephone problems particularly the 0845 number. The Police have had help from Melksham 1st and Melksham new to inform people who to contact. He explained they still get a few complains especially when the call goes through to CRIB (Crime and Incident Recording Bureau) for historic crimes, i.e. notice shed broken into last week – only 67% were answered in 30 seconds, but the figures for January were much better. With regard to burglaries the high figure was down to the Forest area where one man had committed 16 burglaries in three weeks. All Melksham Without Parish Council areas were very quiet

Cllr. Mills commented that there were two top class PCSOs in our area, and they have very good relationships with the young people (Janet Gould always calls into the Youth Club when on duty and talks to the kids) and it has made a big improvement. He asked the inspector to pass thanks on. Mr Andrew Matthews also praised the excellent work of Janet Gould both with pupils and ex-pupils. Mr Brownrigg, Whitley echoed the praise for Maggie Ledbury with regard to vandalism, but said there was still a reluctance on behalf of the public to report to the police, as the public still feel "nothing will be done"

Inspector Cullop explained that unless they know the full extent of the problem, then they can not assist in the correct way. He suggested if residents do not like to telephone, they could arrange a face to face meeting in the area, or attend a task group.

A resident asked if litter was a criminal offence. The Inspector replied that the current district council have employed council Enforcement Officers, but the main problem is late at night with takeaways and drink. Council Enforcement officers don't work at night but they are taking this into account and are looking to provide back up. He also explained that Council enforcement Officers are also to be responsible for parking, but are looking to work together as they feel the need for protection due to abuse (especially late at night). They can give a fixed fine on the spot.

The resident asked the Inspector if more breakdown and statistics on crime figures could be provided in the future, for example, as mentioned before that 16 burglaries ommitted by

one man had distorted the figures. The Inspector informed the council that statistics can be dangerous, they need to look at longer term trends. For example, he knows the shoplifters come into the area from outside as they know that Melksham has little security and CCTV, therefore do not want to give out too much sensitive information publicly.

(See Appendix attached)

7/ Bowerhill Village Hall Trust: The Chair explained that the biggest problem for the committee is that they need new members. The Council noted the report.

8/ Shaw Hill Playing Field & Village Hall: Cllr. Bean reported that the biggest fundraiser for the Hall was the Firework night, but no longer taking place as new legislation is in place. The man responsible for the lighting for 10 years can no longer do it legally. Cllr Bean would like to resign at the next AGM to give someone else a chance. The Council noted the report.

9/ Shaw & Whitley Reading Room: The meeting noted a report from the Treasurer, Mr. Bob Brownrigg. The Chair congratulated the committee on achieving all their targets and on work completed.

10/ St. Barnabas Church Hall, Beanacre: The meeting noted a report from Churchwarden, Stanford Cole.

11/ New Berryfield & Semington Road Village Hall: Cllr Wood explained that new committee members were needed from the area. The council noted the report.

12/ Rachel Fowler Centre: The Council noted the report from Mr. Doug Hodder.

13/ Rachel Fowler Centre: The Council noted the report from Cllr. Wood.

14/ Bowerhill Villager: The meeting noted the report from Mrs. Brenda Chandler.

13/ Shaw and Whitley Village Voice: Mr Brownrigg suggested the reason there was no report was because the magazine was about to cease, but was hopeful that someone would volunteer to take the magazine on at the AGM.

14/ Beanacre Matters: No report. (Cllr Homes not at meeting)

15/ Bowerhill Residents Association: The Council noted the report.

16/ Bowerhill Community Action Group: No report as Dale Robinson was in Australia

17/ Shaw & Whitley Action Group: The Council noted that the Action Group will completely shut down when Megan Ford leaves for Spain. There should be a minute for the April meeting as to what to do with the remaining funds.

18/ Melksham Trust: The meeting noted a report from the Chairman, Cllr. Richard Wiltshire.

19/ Melksham 1st: The Clerk expressed her concern about the Community First body, which seems consultative, whereas Melksham 1st is proactive with projects. She asked the question "If Melksham 1st goes, who will do this work?" The Town Council will not, nor will Melksham Without Parish Council. Cllr Glover said his understanding was that

Melksham 1st will stand, but in a different guise. As a second circle, they do a lot of what Melksham 1st do (don't quite understand this bit Teresa!!!) The Clerk explained that she understood the model, but was not sure who would actually deliver projects. Cllr. Glover made the point that if they (who) ??? did not, they would have nothing left. Cllr. Whiles informed that this conjecture was a bit premature, as this is the job in hand over the next three or four months, and it is an evolving process. We do need Melksham 1st to continue, but how – that will be the meat on the bones over the next few months! Cllr Baines informed that Melksham Without Parish Council's stand on increase in funding to Melksham 1st, had encouraged other funders to increase their contribution too.

20/ Melksham Community Safety Group: The Council noted the report from Mike Mills but there was no further comment on this report as it had been covered by Inspector Cullop.

21/ Neighbour Hood Police Teams: The council noted the report from Cllr. Mills.

22/ Melksham Town Centre Group: The meeting noted the report from Cllr Mike Mills.

23/ Area 32 Melksham Public Transport Group Committee: The council noted the report from Cllr. Alan Baines. : Cllr. Baines reported on the problem bus stop at First Lane Whitley. The residents really do not want it outside their homes.

24/ Friends of Melksham Hospital: The Committee noted the report from Cllr. Gregory Coombes.

25/ Wiltshire Association of Local Councils: The Council noted the report from Cllr. Coombes.

26/ Wilts & Berks Partnership: The Council noted the report from Cllr. Rolf Brindle.

27/ Melksham 1st Waterways Task Team: The Council noted this report.

28/ Whitley Players: The Council noted the report from Mr. John Hamley.

29/ Youth & Community Service: The meeting noted a report from Mrs. Nicol, the Parish Council representative.

30/ The Spa – Rubbish Bin: It was suggested that a litter bin should be installed where the seat is, as children sit on the bench after school then dispose of their rubbish, as do the late night clubbers. The main problem is that people put rubbish into the culvert, thus causing a problem with flooding. The culver was recently cleared by a resident. The Chair suggested the Clerk get a quote for a bin, for the next meeting.

31/ The Droc at the Spa: One of the Spa residents explained that Clarence were arguing about which parts of the drain was blocked or not. The problem is that the water channel runs through resident's gardens and no one knows who owns it , as it is not in the property deeds. He had spoken to Ian Kerr, WWDC who agreed it was not on any maps, therefore it needs to be clarified with other Environmental agencies, if it was originally a water channel or sewage.

Cllr. Baines informed that Berryfield Brook is classed as a main river, so is therefore the environment responsibility, but under road may be the responsibility of the Highways department! Fifteen years ago, divers went down and cleared it.

The Clerk will write to the Highways and also to Wessex Water to establish responsibility. Cllr Baines thought the Droc would come under Wessex as storm drainage. A resident presented photographs. The resident said the lighting at the Spa was particularly bad, and travellers coming through on bikes on the cycle route, was a bit hairy. The Chair said lights were needed 200 metres from the beginning of the Spa to 200 metres at Cllr. Brindle's end on the tree side.

Cllr. Baines suggested it should be included as part of the school project. The Clerk to take this up with Neil Ward.

32/ Condition of Road outside School and Village Hall: The Chair explained that Halifax Road, Cheshire Close down towards Ludlow Close and Hewitt Close were particularly bad. Cllr. Glover explained Wellington Road and the dip on Pathfinder Way was not good. (Cllr. Glover declared an interest at this point).

The Clerk to take this matter up with Highways, but ask that all Halifax Road in general should be looked at, but particularly the areas mentioned.

33/ Speed Ramps at Halifax Road: A letter from resident, Mrs Wendy Scott regarding the speed bumps were passed to Highways several times, with no reply. Mr Matthews commented that he has 50 staff at the school, with no complaints because they drive slowly through the entrance to the school gate. He was however, concerned about parking on the grassed areas outside the school. Cllr. Glover agreed that there are more people parking on the grass and over footpaths at Bowerhill, and said he would report this to the Police. The Clerk will again contact Highways about the speed bumps.

34/ Bowerhill School: The Head teacher Mr Matthews informed that the school has now 350 pupils, and have increased to 14 classes, which is 2 per year group and over 50 staff. They are in process of developing the outside area for "early years pupils" with the original area now an all weather with canopy. They have fenced off the "grassed area in front of the village hall, for the early years, and the official opening is at the end of April. Mr. Matthews explained that the school have just been awarded the Quality Assurance certificate for early years, and have also received Healthy School check – PE, healthy eating, relationships.

The staff council meet fortnightly. He was pleased to say they had been awarded a full international award by the Wiltshire Times??? acknowledging their international work for geography as well as the French Language. Over the last two years, improvements have been carried out, the mobile classrooms have gone, there are cabins for drums and changing rooms. There have also been improvements to the reception area, and long lasting art works, mosaics and sculptures in the corridors. He was delighted that they have 100% attendance at Parent's evenings, and also a strong PTA.

At the end of the reports, The Chair invited any other comments from the public. No further matters were raised.

Thanks: The Chair expressed thanks to everyone for coming.

The Meeting closed at and everyone adjourned for refreshments

Chairman, 17th March 2008