

MINUTES of the Annual Parish Council of Melksham Without Parish Council held at Melksham Town Hall, Market Place on Monday, 21st March, 2011 at 7.00 pm.

Present: Parish Council: Cllr Richard Wood (Chairman of the Meeting); Cllrs. Alan Baines; Elizabeth Bean; Rolf Brindle, Gregory Coombes; Paul Clark; Pat Nicol; Mike Sankey and John Glover (from 8.20pm)

Other Community members: Cllr Roy While (Wiltshire Council); Inspector David Cullop, Sgt. Barry Dalton; (Wiltshire Constabulary); Mr Chris Holden, & Miriam Zaccarelli (Melksham Community Area Partnership) Mr. Andrew Matthews, (Head Teacher, Bowerhill Primary School) Mr Stephen Clark, (Headteacher, Melksham Oak Community School).

Apologies: Cllrs. Mike Mills (Parish Council Chairman); Cllrs. Steve Petty; Don Millard; Maurice Hubert and Wiltshire Councillor Mark Griffiths.

1/ Welcome: The Chairman of the Meeting, Cllr. Richard Wood warmly welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2/ Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 2010: Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday, 22nd March, 2010, were confirmed and signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

3/ Chair's Report: The Chair, Cllr Richard Wood delivered Cllr. Mike Mills' report of the work of the Council during the year as Cllr. Mills was unable to attend. (*See Appendix attached*).

4/ Wiltshire Councillor Roy While: Cllr While reported that it had been another eventful year, particularly in the Parish area, where it always seems to be the centre of activity. This will continue with the forthcoming campus, wherever it may be sited. Cllr While was pleased that the Planning Inspector had turned down the developer's appeal against the Planning Committee's refusal of the application for housing on the Local Centre Land off Hornchurch Road. The developer is now required to prepare a marketing plan for the site, which is what has been asked for over the last few years.

Cllr While reported that good progress had been made at a recent meeting about the transfer of asset of Bowerhill Sports field, which will provide a superb facility for the Parish. The Pavilion will be replaced, and Cllr While was pressing for completion of the road link, which is not easy within the current economic climate, but was hopeful of it being sorted within the next two years.

The last Wiltshire Council Budget meeting was the longest meeting they had ever had lasting over 11 hours. The recession looks set to continue for several years and the reshaping of public services will be the trend for a number of years to come with the aim of saving £99 million over the next few years. 240 managers had left over the last few months. In light of this, residents had queried how the Campus was affordable; Cllr While confirmed that this would be done from capital expenditure and public loans. In the Leisure Review, Melksham was fortunate to have had their Campus prioritised at the top of the list. The Campus could lay groundwork for an exciting leisure development and he could see both sides of the controversial debate. With regards to planning applications, other than the information about the Local Centre Land, there was not much to report as both the Boomerang Fish & Chip Shop and Boomerang applications had been deferred.

Cllr Coombes thanked Cllr While for coming to every Parish Council meeting.

Cllr John Glover joined the Meeting at 8.20pm.

5/ Wiltshire Annual Policing: Inspector Cullop thanked the Chair and Councillors for inviting him once again, as this was now his fourth Annual Parish Meeting. Last year, he had been concerned that crime would rise in the Community Area as it had increased in size and there was continuing growth in the Parish. However, there was good news contained in figures released that morning that showed that crime had dropped in all areas; except for motor vehicles.

Inspector Cullop explained that Wiltshire Police had to find 20% cuts in their budget. This was very small in comparison to other forces. Wiltshire was the oldest County Police force, and top performing; the challenge was to keep at this position in these challenging times, with 150 less police officers. There had been no recruitment for two years, and they were now going through the process of losing 250 police staff. Inspector Cullop explained that they would do all they could to protect front line police, particularly the Neighbourhood Policing Teams. From the 4th April, the 55 current Neighbourhood Police teams will reduce to 20; to be in line with Wiltshire's 20 Community Areas. The Town/Rural/North and South beat areas will become one area, with one team and 3 sub-divisions, with no change to personnel or staff reductions. The Melksham Community Safety Group has been identified as good practice and will be the model for elsewhere. Every third meeting will be combined with the Neighbourhood Tasking Group meeting. In the Neighbourhood Police team, there is only one change in the last three years; Kevin Harmsworth is moving on, and Kane Fulbrook-Smith is replacing him; this reflects the wishes of the Parish that they wish to maintain continuity.

Inspector Cullop then invited Sgt Barry Dalton, Community Beat Manager, who was responsible for setting up the Speed Watch Teams, to update the meeting. Sgt. Dalton explained that the Police were keen to encourage volunteers to come forward and be trained for Community Speed Watch. Speeding concerns had been brought to the attention of the Police during the year and they now wished to capitalise on the interest shown by local residents. The Police would complete a survey to see which roads were suitable for the Scheme. The Woodrow team were already trained, with training planned for the Bowerhill team and Shaw & Whitley team over the next few months. Cllr. Baines informed that the Woodrow team had completed 5 sessions to date which showed a 2% speeding rate but it was noticeable that traffic slows down when they see the volunteer teams. Cllr. Coombes was concerned that a motorist would be disturbed when people jumped out of hedges with cameras. Sgt Dalton explained that the volunteers would be trained up by a Traffic Officer, and did not or should not jump out of hedges; they would wear high visibility clothing and be in teams of three. The whole aim of the scheme is to act as a visible deterrent to speeding motorists.

A member of the public Mr. Jonathan Pritchard commented that it was nice to hear Woodrow mentioned, and requested the Community Speed Watch to be in operation from 8.30 – 4.30 as the road was used as a “rat run” during the road works caused by the Asda construction. Cllr. Baines explained that the speed watch volunteers have the local knowledge and decide which are the best times to go out. Cllr While agreed that it is very costly to introduce new engineering solutions, as highway budgets had been cut down. He also paid tribute to the excellent service from Police Sgt. Barry Dalton and Community Police Officer, Janet Gould.

Sgt Dalton went on to explain the policy of Restorative Justice which was brought in a year ago. It has been used within Melksham Without twice to date. A group of girls cleaned graffiti on a bus shelter and pocket money was used to repair damage to a greenhouse.

The Chairman thanked Inspector Cullop for coming and for the excellent police work in the Parish areas.

6/ Village Hall Committees and Community Action Groups – The Chairman, Cllr Wood thanked all the Committees of the Village Halls for their excellent work over the year, and the Council noted the following reports.

Berryfield and Semington New Village Hall
Bowerhill Village Hall Trust
Pavilion Youth Club
Berryfield and Semington Road Action Group
Bowerhill Residents Action Group
St Barnabas Church Hall, Beanacre
Shaw Hill Playing Field & Village Hall
Whitley Reading Rooms
Rachel Fowler Centre

Shaw Hall: Mr Clive Briggs, Chairman of Shaw Hall Committee explained that the Committee had an inauspicious start last year struggling to get committee members, but now a whole year on he was delighted to say things were surprisingly successful. The Committee had a good Business Plan, they had managed to use their own funds to replace the antiquated boiler and heating system. The Basketball Court on the Playing Field was going ahead as funds were in place, and the Hall Lease had been revised and signed by the Trustees.

7/ Schools:

Melksham Oak Community School: Mr Stephen Clark, Head Teacher thanked the Council for inviting him to the Annual Parish Meeting. He was delighted to report that the school was oversubscribed in Year 7 for the first time, which was a good reflection on the School. The children had recognised the investment being made in them. Mr Clark invited all to visit the School as they would be most welcome. The official opening ceremony was to be held in July. Cllr Wood commented that there was a different ethos in the school now, the place was flooded with light and it created a great atmosphere. Stephen Clark agreed that Melksham was very lucky to have such a school.

Cllr. Glover commented that at school closing time, there were lots of children coming down the narrow pavement. He questioned if there was any possibility of improving the footpath at the back of the school to take the children away from the main road. Stephen Clark explained that this pavement was wider than the one at the Railway Bridge which the young people had used at the previous George Ward School. Although there was a back gate it was not lit and children would have to walk down a dark alley way in the middle of the country side. Mrs Ellis, a resident of the Spa commented that the children's behaviour was commendable, and she had not noticed any increase in litter.

Bowerhill Primary School: Mr Andrew Matthews, Head Teacher reported that the year had been full of success and challenges, including how to approach new budget restrictions, the new National Curriculum and successful awards. They had partnered with schools in India and France and were fortunate to be able to visit them. There had also been development of electronic communications which staff and pupils were both involved in. Mr Matthews was delighted at how the schools in Melksham work together in their joint priorities such as curtailing holidays in term time, transfer of

students, parent support advisers, joint events with Melksham Oak, sharing and drawing on each others expertise rather than buying in additional services. Stephen Clerk agreed, citing Melksham Oak's relationship with the primary schools as very important.

Forest & Sandridge C of E School: The Council noted the report.

9/ **Bowerhill Sports Field:** Mike Rogers, AFC Melksham, explained that they had 500 children playing on the field at the weekend; it was exciting as it was not just used by adults but local children as well. Bowerhill Sports Field is a well used and respected site, with positive activities taking place all year round. At the AFC Youth Club, they were training the 16 – 17 year olds to be FA (Football Association) Coaches, to put something back into the community. The latest drawings for the new Pavilion are all fully supported by the FA.

Youth Work & Play Parks: Cllr Bean stressed she could not speak more highly of Sarah Howe who had worked at the Canberra covering Lorraine Lugg's maternity leave, where she had made it a delightful place for the youngsters to be. Cllr Nicol agreed and they expressed their thanks to Sarah for all her hard work and wished her continued success in her move to Lynham.

10/ **Area 32 Committee & Melksham Railway Dev. Group:** Cllr Alan Baines gave a report on the Melksham Town development works which required the Market Place bus stop to be moved again. The works in Church Street were still continuing, however the buses only need to stop outside Crown House for 7 weeks from 4th April. It will be the only time the High Street will be affected, and is not as bad as at first feared. He went on to explain that the other recent development was that the Zig Zag service to Shaw and Whitley stopped very suddenly and Wiltshire Council had to find another operator overnight. This they did successfully with a slightly altered timetable; they were managing to work with two vehicles instead of three.

Cllr Baines informed that ASDA was making a contribution to public transport when the store was up and running. It appears that the contribution will be used to operate a second vehicle for the No. 14 Town service which will provide an hourly service throughout the day, with an extension of the route, and this should start in August on a new contract.

11/ **Melksham Hospital and Health Services Reports –** Cllr Clark commented that the addition to the Health and Social Services Bill was still in a state of flux, and all parties were concerned about new proposals. Many things were still to be resolved, there was a shortage of money for services as no inflation rate had been built in, but Health Service money would be ring fenced. There was increased demand on resources with more inventions, procedures, and more effective, but expensive, drugs. Provision by the Local Authority will be very different in the future.

12/ **Melksham Community Area Partnership(MCAP) Miriam Zaccarelli and Chris Holden -Campus Consultation:** Chris Holden, Chairman of MCAP thanked the Chair for inviting them to the Annual Parish Meeting. He explained that the Partnership had put things in place to gather feedback from 2nd February until 29th March on the proposed Campus. This was to enable the Area Board to make recommendations to the Cabinet following a special Area Board meeting on the 29th March. The site option preferred by Wiltshire Council was Option 5 near Melksham Oak, putting all services on one site. He explained that the field which they were proposing to build on was owned by Wiltshire Council. Many questions about the site had arisen, including ownership queries, but Chris had been assured that all queries would be answered at the meeting on 29th March.

Cllr Pat Nicol questioned if there was already a "chosen" site. If there were, the consultation was not worth doing as it would make no difference to the outcome. Miriam Zaccarelli confirmed that the Partnership had to carry out a huge amount of work for the Consultation. Chris Holden explained that the Partnership had been constrained as had been instructed to consult on the Wiltshire Council preferred option only; but there was enough space on the survey for residents to raise other issues that would be reported on the 29th March. Cllr Glover responded that he felt the Conclusion of the Report was biased, as recommendations ignored findings from Wiltshire Council's own Sustainability Report. Chris Holden explained that he was not able to comment at present and that in fact the Area Board had requested that he did not attend the Area Board meeting on the 29th March as they felt he would be biased in his presentation; preferring presentation of the Survey results by the Steering Group. Cllr Wood emphasised that Chris Holden should be able to attend as a resident to put his point of view across.

Cllr Baines quoted conclusions from the Wiltshire Council Sustainability Report (dated October 2010) which stated the most sustainable and therefore preferred option was for an all town centre location, and the conclusions for moving services out of the town centre were negative for the future economic health of the town. Further research is required before any decision is taken to move things to the edge of the town. He thought the suggestion that everything needs to be on one site, was not the way to proceed. Good facilities were within the town and it is difficult to justify moving everything to the edge of the town. He felt Wiltshire Council owned the land and therefore wanted to use it, but it was difficult to access their land through the Melksham Oak School. Stephen Clark agreed that he would not want access through the School. Chris Holden said the Sustainability Report Core Document had produced additional rational for moving the library out of the town as they could not find a town centre location big enough to build the Campus. Cllr. Wood felt that it made no sense, and queried if residents could ask questions at the meeting. Miriam Zaccarelli explained that questions had been submitted to Wiltshire Council in advance. A resident feared it was a forgone conclusion to move the Campus out of town. The library should be left in the Town Centre and Wiltshire Council should build the rest of the Campus on the site vacated by St. Michael's School which is land they own in the Town.

Comment and Question Time: Miriam Zaccarelli explained that the Melksham Community Area Partnership were interested in receiving suggestions and proposals concerning any matter of interest in the parish, including provision of recreational, cultural and other amenities for the parish.

Mr G Roberts who is involved in the Bowls Club informed that Weston Super Mare incorporated a branch library in the Campus, but the main library was still in the centre of the town. A resident questioned if the school library in Melksham Oak would be opened to the public? She also questioned if the public could use the sports facilities. Stephen Clark explained that there would be too many problems for shared use in the School. He was also surprised that Wiltshire Council had not previously communicated to him that they were planning on using the site for leisure facilities, despite all the planning meetings for the new School. Swimming was not part of the Secondary School Curriculum and so the swimming facilities were not needed at the Melksham Oak site. Stephen Clark explained that they welcomed the investment by Wiltshire Council but felt that if the library was closed, it would be difficult to re-open.

Mrs Roberts asked if swimming was on the Curriculum for primary schools, as Bowerhill Primary School travel to the Blue Pool by coach but would be able to walk to Melksham Oak. Andrew Matthews expressed concerns about the Library but warned that residents should not lose sight of

the bigger picture; i.e the whole Campus project. Chris Holden reported that the Deputy Leader of the Council had said that the library move was not a pre-requisite of the Campus. The Chairman thanked Miriam and Chris for coming to the Meeting.

14. The Council was pleased to note the following reports:-

CAYPIG -Youth Work – Cllr. Bean and Cllr Nicol

Bowerhill Villager – Mrs Brenda Chandler

Connect – Shaw and Whitley - Clive Briggs

Friends of Melksham Hospital, - Cllr Coombes

Wiltshire Assoc. of Local Councils – Cllr Coombes

Whitley Reading Rooms – Cllr Coombes

Melksham Community Safety Report - Cllr. Mike Mills

Melksham West Neighbourhood Police Teams – Cllr. Bean

Whitley Players – Mr John Hamley

The Chairman thanked the councillors and all who had submitted reports. He also thanked the Councillors for their hard work during the year, those who represented the various organisations and the public for attending

Meeting closed at 8.35 pm and everyone adjourned for refreshments.

Chairman, 21st March, 2012