

Bowerhill Residents Action Group

Minutes of the Zoom meeting held on Thursday 11 February 2021

From 7pm to 9.15pm.

Present – Committee members

Mark Harris	Pauline Helps	Pauline Shea-Simonds
Dale Robinson	David Pafford	Amanda Slade

Present – Potential Committee members and others

Sharon Pike	Viv Feltham	Caroline Fielding
Robert Shea-Simonds	Mark Blackham	Tina Duffin
Teresa Strange	Nick Holder	

1) Opening remarks by Lead Member/Coordinator

- a) The Committee as it stands now (2 vacancies – can we co-opt now?)
- b) The Constitution as it stands now/future amendments
- c) Melksham Without Parish Council representative (David Pafford?)
- d) Wiltshire Council (Melksham Without South) representative (Nick Holder?)
- e) The format of this meeting (may be slightly different to what you're used to!)

Mark Harris, as current Lead member / Coordinator, said that technically the last Committee voted in was at the 2019 AGM as a 2020 AGM was not possible due to the pandemic. According to the BRAG Constitution there should be a representative from the police and one from the Parish Council. Pauline Helps said that after Police re-organisation they no longer had the time to attend community group meetings. Nick Holder said that since he became involved with BRAG there were 2 representatives from the Parish Council.

It was agreed that David Pafford would be the representative from the Parish Council and Nick Holder would be the representative from Wiltshire Council, but in a non-voting role. The Constitution will be amended at the next AGM.

Currently there are 10 Committee members, but no executive officers as they have all resigned their posts. **All were asked to consider stepping up to fill one of the roles as either Treasurer, Secretary, Chairperson or Vice-Chairperson.**

2) Apologies for absence

Apologies have been received from Marilyn Mills, John Glover and Sue Tweedie

3) Minutes of last meeting and subsequent newsletters/reports - are they a true record? (It should be noted these are all available on the MWPC website)

Pauline Helps advised that in at least 2 emails following the distribution of the March 2020 minutes she asked if there were any errors in them. She had had no comments so assumed they were correct so asked the Parish Council to publish them. With the Newsletters she didn't think the content was like the minutes, so these were also published.

This was accepted.

4) Matters arising/comments

As the last meeting was nearly a year ago, it was agreed that any matters arising were either resolved or were no longer relevant.

5) Correspondence relating to BRAG and its activities (has anyone received any?)

Pauline Helps has received an email from Keep Britain Tidy advising that **the Great British Spring Clean for 2021 will be held from 28 May to 13 June. Pauline will organise a Litter Pick** for a date within that period as long as Covid-19 restrictions allow (currently no organised Litter Picks are allowed).

Teresa Strange has heard that the **CPRE Best Kept Village competition** will take place this year. First round will be sometime in June, and the round for finalists will be in July. She said that the Parish Council has maps and information to help whoever takes this on. Pauline Helps added that she has copies of paperwork from previous years' entries.

Teresa Strange said that the **It's Your Neighbourhood section of the Britain in Bloom competition** also appears to be held this year. BRAG will have to see if they want to enter the picnic area again.

6) Treasurer's report – Jenny Butcher?

Jenny Butcher was not present and as she has resigned as Treasurer it is necessary for someone to take on the role. The bank account will have to be altered and signatories changed. The urgent action now needed is to be able to bank the money that Mark Harris, with the help of Teresa Strange, got as a grant from the Area Board to purchase benches etc for around Bowerhill. It was suggested **Mark telephones Jenny for the bank details to enable a credit transfer.**

7) Melksham Without Parish Council report – David Pafford

By-pass - David Pafford said that there is a lot of misinformation about this issue and members need to be aware of what others may say. More will be said about this issue later in the meeting.

David thanked the outgoing officers for all their hard work in the past.

There are elections for the Parish Council coming up and if anyone was considering standing, he wanted to advise them that being a Councillor is a big commitment for a number of years.

David thanked Mark Harris for his work in getting the grant from the Area Board.

Mark thanked Teresa Strange for her help with the grant application and also for her help in getting the Parish Council grant that will mainly pay for the BRAG insurance, hall rent and consumables for maintaining the picnic area.

(Amanda Slade left the meeting)

8) Wiltshire Council (Melksham Without South) report – Nick Holder

Many items Nick Holder was to mention will be included later in the meeting.

The elections that will include voting for Councillors for the Parish and County Councils will take place on 6 May 2021.

Building work on the Melksham campus will be starting on 1 March 2021.

(Viv Feltham left the meeting)

9) Picnic Area Working Party report and future plans – Jenny Butcher

Pauline Helps said that Jenny was not able to get to the picnic area at the moment, but she had heard that there are plans to continue with the maintenance in the spring. BRAG will continue to support work at the picnic area.

Dale Robinson asked if the bin would be replaced. Teresa Strange explained about who and how the bin was emptied and that as the picnic area is not on MWPC land then it had been decided the bin would not be replaced.

10) Work for Parish Steward

Mark Harris said that if there was anything the Parish Steward could do then members should contact him or the Parish Council.

11) Melksham/Seend Neighbourhood Plans

Melksham Neighbourhood Plan – Regulation 15 was completed on 3 February and the Plan has gone forward to Regulation 16. There will be a referendum after 6 May. Further information is at <https://www.melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org/> and regular updates will be shown in Melksham Independent News.

Seend Neighbourhood Plan – The Seend Neighbourhood Plan can be seen at <https://www.seendparishplan.org/>. Pauline Helps said that she, with the help of Teresa Strange were successful in getting the BRAG picnic area included in the Plan as a Local Green Space to give it protection.

12) Melksham Rail User Group/Melksham Hub

For all public transport information, the Melksham Rail User Group website has a lot of information - <http://www.mrug.org.uk/> Melksham Hub, that is part of MRUG, and can be found on their website has details of the station refurbishment and new café which will be opening next month.

13) Wiltshire Council Local Plan Review (five-year land supply/future housing development)

The Local Plan Review can be found at <https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/article/1082/Local-Plan-Review> where there is a link to the **Consultation that finishes on 9 March**. (Click again on “Local Plan Review Consultation”, then scroll down to “Planning for Melksham”) There is lots of information and maps, some of which are in the latest edition of Melksham Independent News.

Nick Holder said that members need to be aware of erroneous information as Melksham is

not the preferred option for Wiltshire housing. Most will probably go to Chippenham, then Trowbridge, then Salisbury, then Melksham.

Consultants are reviewing the areas in light blue on the map, as reproduced in the MIN, that are classified as “may be suitable for housing”.

Wilts CC has to prove to gov’t that it has a 5-year plan for housing, which it doesn’t quite have, then spasmodic building won’t continue. One of these new planning applications is for land next to the Taylor Wimpey site off Pathfinder Way, marked as 9 on the map. There have been significant objections to this application by Bloor and Nick Holder has “called it in”.

BRAG could engage with the objections as well as individuals.

Nick will have a meeting with the Planning Team to discuss housing and the feasibility of each identified area.

14) A350 Melksham Bypass Project (habitat/footfall survey)

The by-pass was proposed by the Dept of Transport as part of it’s aim to improve road links in the West of England. £1.4m has been given to Wiltshire CC to build the case for the by-pass. The recent consultation, that received over 600 responses, was non-statutory. Mark Harris has been in touch with Atkins, the surveyors and they will provide an update shortly. The cameras that were recently put at the picnic area counted “bodies” not people on the cycle path and towpath. Nick Holder said that the initial consultation was effective, and the formal statutory consultation will be held about June or July with no business case possible until about a years’ time. **BRAG and individuals may want to engage with the statutory consultation.**

Nick said that his personal view was that there were significant financial barriers to the by-pass routes east and south of Bowerhill which would see little benefit in relation to the speed or number of vehicles. Nick prefers route 10a, which is shorter and cheaper and utilises the Eastern Way that is already there. Mark Blackman queried pedestrian crossings of Eastern Way and was told it would be solved with tunnels or bridges.

Mark Harris said that BRAG would not take a stance yet until more is known. All agreed that it should be away from Bowerhill for environmental and noise reasons.

15) Any other business/issues

Mark Harris referred to the article in the MIN about BRAG and thanked Dale and Pauline for their input.

Nick Holder said that traffic calming on Bowerhill is being looked at. There is going to be a survey at the west end of Halifax Road and the speed bumps by the school reviewed. It was agreed that the speed bumps in Falcon Way do a good job.

Pauline Shea-Simonds asked if we could get some feedback from the Police about any issues on Bowerhill. **Mark Harris will try and get in contact with the Neighbourhood Policing Team.**

Pauline also asked about the artwork for the entrance to Bowerhill. Teresa said that it was being fabricated, and then there will be a site visit. It will probably be put where the current Taylor Wimpey sign is. The Parish Council will insure it and it will be put on a concrete plinth to protect it from grass cutting. There will also be a display board and a Parish Council board on the triangle area in the centre of the houses. The play area is to be opened shortly and will eventually be taken over by the Parish Council.

16) Any comments on the format of this meeting and how it was run?

17) Closing remarks by Lead Member/Coordinator

18) Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting will probably also be by Zoom and will be held in about a month's time.

Mark Harris will plan this.