

Bowerhill Residents Action Group (BRAG)
General Open Meeting - Minutes
Zoom meeting held on Thursday 11th March 2021
From 7pm to 9.40pm.

The meeting was initially hosted on the Zoom platform of Mark Harris but when some difficulties arose with the recording facility Teresa Strange offered to host a reconvened meeting using MWPC Zoom account. Parish Councillors present (David Pafford and Robert Shea-Simonds) and Wiltshire Councillor Nick Holder agreed that this would be acceptable. TS forwarded new meeting invite links to all members and the reconvened meeting was opened by MH at 7.15 pm.

New Zoom Recording Link:

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/3Gwx2J_MmuIK0L0u1TluRJQ-e2yp8BrHNpYslm03VAr-ljnB40lJaX1J6mKqb2eLaNM2xosmFUI4Xt-h

Passcode: pFG#N3pN

Present - Current Committee members

Mark Harris - MH	Dale Robinson - DR	David Pafford – DP (MWPC)
Amanda Slade - AS	Pauline Helps - PH	Pauline Shea-Simonds - PSS
Marilyn Mills - MM		

Present – BRAG Members & Invited Guest

Paul Jupp (Guest)	Caroline Fielding CF	Mark Blackham - MB
Rob Tweedie - RT	Sharon Pike - SP	
Nick Holder -NH (Wilts Council)	Robert Shea-Simonds(MWPC)RSS	Teresa Strange (MWPC) - TS

MH welcomed members back into the Zoom meeting, which proceeded under his Chairmanship as BRAG Committee Lead Member/Coordinator.

1) Appointment of Minutes Secretary for this meeting only:

RSS offered to take the minutes, dependant on Zoom recording being made available. MH thanked RSS and **TS offered to forward the icloud Zoom meeting URL weblink.**

2) Guest speaker Paul Jupp (Meadow in my Garden):

MH welcomed and introduced PJ, inviting him to give a presentation about the services he provides. PJ offered thanks for the opportunity and gave a verbal description overview of Meadow in my Garden, summarised as follows:

- It is a small not for profit Community Interest Company started in 2008 and based in Devizes.
- Primary focus was to encourage and support a more naturalistic approach to the maintenance of private gardens, allowing insect life cycle proliferation.
- This focus has now expanded to include support, advice and management of other open public spaces and motivating people to think about all insect life; bees, butterflies etc.
- Also looking at new seed types for specific insect life environment improvement.
- It has become apparent that many open public (green) spaces are being managed to within an inch of their lives, for green colour only.
- Trees, hedges and bulb planting all important.
- Managed a Devizes bulb project initially to plant 10,000 bulbs; this year the target is 100,000!
- Bulb planting would be a very good starting point for a BRAG project before moving on to new and other ideas.
- Resident’s opinions and support to be sought.
- PJ will provide real experience help as needed and would welcome further contact in due course.

MH thanked PJ opened the meeting to members for questions:

- PSS suggested that the path down to, and the picnic area itself would be a suitable area for wild flower planting but that unfortunately the Committee member for leading the Picnic area group was not in attendance. **It was agreed that MH would make contact with Jenny Butcher to have an initial conversation about this and the Picnic site generally.**
- CF stated that the naturalistic approach to the flower planting and maintenance or specific green areas in Bowerhill was a wonderful idea. She has previous experience of this in schools and thinks school children would make keen bulb planting volunteers. **Contact to be made with Bowerhill Primary and the Oak Secondary Schools (MH?).**
- RT reported that with previous contact with PJ he had, during Sept/October 2019, planted approximately 2,000 Bluebell bulbs in the small triangular woodland on the other side of the canal on the left hand side over the swing bridge. **He encouraged members to view it over the coming Spring and early Summer months.**
- SP suggested the various grass mounds as good potential areas for Meadow planting, which prompted input from PH and a discussion about Brabazon Way and the grass area behind Gompels. TS reported about the grassland area behind Wellington Drive and the Hornchurch Public Open Space, both under MWPC maintenance provision. She asked particularly about what plants would flourish in wet condition areas. PJ suggested tree line wet areas and some specific wild flower planting. He suggested starting with “easy” areas first before leading onto potential wetland meadows.

It was agreed that this would be an excellent BRAG project to take forward for discussion and plans at the next meeting. SP agreed to make contact with PJ who had offered to make a walk round site visit, to offer initial ideas. MH thanked PJ for his attendance and much appreciated his offer of help in the future.

- MH reported that Jenny and Graham Butcher were keen to carry on leading the Picnic site maintenance group but was unaware at this time as to the extent of their time commitment. **MH agreed to having a discussion with them about this and the wild flower planting project. Also to discuss the question of key holding for, and maintenance of, the Picnic site BRAG notice boards.**

3) Benches and picnic tables – an update from Teresa Strange, Clerk to MWPC

- MH reported on conversations with TS, DR and Jenny Butcher concerning the benches on the bridleway path and confirmed their agreement about the current situation. MH then invited TS to report on the situation on behalf of MWPC.
- TS reported as follows:
 1. Purchases are based on Local Area Board Grant application and match funding from MWPC.
 2. On Falcon Way 3 new benches approved (one already in place) – one next to bus stop adjacent to Kingfisher Way and one on the green opposite Tesco. On the Hornchurch Public Open Space area the two broken benches are scheduled for replacement along with the supply of two new picnic tables to join the one supplied by Gompels in the middle of the area. A discussion on the placement shape of the tables followed and a horseshoe shape was agreed. **MB agreed to liaise and oversee placement. TS confirmed that the vehicle access to the site was currently closed. This would be re-instated in due course to allow delivery of benches & tables. TS (MWPC) to progress items 1, 2 & 3.**
 3. DR confirmed and TS agreed the locations for the two benches to be replaced on the bridle path: first, the Mills Anniversary Bench and second the one adjacent to the towpath. Also the installation of a new one at the top of the bridleway close to the parking area. DR asked if the wood from the old benches could be retained for use by BRAG picnic group. This was agreed. A request from CF for new benches to have a higher seat was confirmed by TS. **MWPC to continue overseeing the operation.**

4. A member started a discussion regarding rubbish bins but no action was agreed.

TS had to leave the meeting at this stage, but the MWPC Zoom hosting would continue.

4) **Apologies for absence** . MH reported apologies had been received from: Sue Tweedie, Hazel Muse, Viv Feltham and Vanessa Allen.

MH also reported that he had a number of new names on his BRAG contact list. He hoped that new members would be attending future meetings.

5) **Minutes of last meeting held on Zoom 11 Feb 2021:** Taken and produced by PH and previously circulated.

- MH thanked Pauline Helps for all her excellent work as BRAG Secretary.
- In the absence of any amendment requests MH proposed that the minutes be accepted as a true record. This was unanimously agreed.

Minutes to be signed.

6) **Matters arising**

- **BRAG Committee New Executive Officers:** MH asked for interest from members in fulfilling the vacant posts of: **Chairman, Vice Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary.**

The meeting expressed the hope that Mark Harris would move forward from his current role as temporary Chairman and BRAG Committee Lead Member/Coordinator to take up the role as **BRAG Chairman**. MH intimated that he would be happy to do so.

MH to retain Chairman role.

A discussion took place regarding finances generally with MH reporting that there were monies due to be paid into the Bank Account within 30days and that a grant funding application had been submitted.

CF reported that due to her restricted visual capability she is unable to fulfil any executive role but is keen to be a Committee Member.

MH thanked Mark Blackham for his offer to stand for the **Treasurer** role and DP proposed that he take on the role as Acting Treasurer forthwith. This was unanimously agreed with the hope that Jenny Butcher and Teresa Strange would help with handing over to MB all financial matters/records etc.

MH, MB, JB & TS to liaise.

With no other current nominations MH expressed the hope that interest in **Vice Chairman and Secretary positions** would be forthcoming for the April meeting to enable election of officers and committee at a BRAG AGM to be held during the second half of May.

Agenda Item for April Meeting

- **Best Kept Village and Britain in Bloom Competitions:** PH has all the CPRE records and paperwork for the Best Kept Village from the last 2 or 3 years. There was no immediate interest in taking this or the Britain in Bloom (JB - Picnic Area) on for 2021; **possibly refer through to MWPC?**
- **Treasurer's Report:** MH reported that this will be covered in Item 8) Financial Statement.
- **Tesco Donation:** MH reported that he had discovered that Tesco were to make a £1000 donation to each sponsored Local Community Organisation and that, as BRAG had entered, we should be in line for this donation. **MB to liaise with Tesco.**
- **Melksham Bypass:** MH reported that the signs on the Bridle Path down to the canal were misleading and factually incorrect. A general discussion followed with agreement to a suggestion from DP that we should not at this time continue to speculate over the various options. A further

official consultation period will be bought forward and BRAG should monitor developments and react as appropriate.

- **Picnic Area and Bridle Path.** A general discussion took place about dog mess and bins. The meeting was reminded that the Picnic Area is within Seend Parish and therefore MWPC have no formal obligations. **DP agreed to discuss with MWPC/TS about the possibility of replacing the bin at the end of Locking Close with a larger one.**
- **Melksham Neighbourhood and Seend Parish Plans.** These were noted.
- **Melksham Station Hub Café:** Due to open on 29th March.
- **Planning Application for Housing Development South of Western Way:** MH had received agreement to object from 6 BRAG Members so had submitted on behalf of BRAG; he had noted 10 objections placed as well as MWPC.
- **Neighbourhood Policing Team:** General discussion with agreement for contact to be made and maintained. MH reported that he had already liaised with NPT; they are apparently not in a position to attend BRAG meetings. They did state that Janet Gould is our WPCSO.

7) Correspondence

No correspondence to or from BRAG reported.

8) Financial statement

- **Treasurer's Report:** MH stated that he had received the report to Jan 2021 from Jenny Butcher, which he had circulated to members. He reported the main facts/figures as follows:

Bank balance from 16.04.2019.....£ 958

Income over next 18 months to Jan 2021 (donations, grants etc).....£2277

Balance.....£3235

Expenditure for same period.....~~£2663~~

Jan 2021 Bank Balance £ 572

JB had reported subsequent additional income of a cheque for £50 from Seend PC and £100 from Melksham Council (MTC or MWPC?).

- **Picnic Area Expenses/Running Costs:** MH reported that JB had requested approval of some expenditure. A discussion surrounding management of BRAG finances followed taking into account that the current signatories (PH, JB & DR) are no longer executive officers. MM stated that within another group she attends they have 3 signatories namely the Chairperson, Treasurer and one other committee member. It was agreed that this would be a good principle to apply to BRAG finances and that this matter should be carried forward for action. It was also agreed that any expenditure payment requests must be approved by the committee until such time as the new signatory protocol was in place.

9) Melksham Without Parish Council report – Councillor David Pafford

Report from DP covered 3 main items:

- **Vehicular Access (for Contractors vehicles) to Hornchurch Road Public Open Space:** This is currently not possible due to Wilts Council installing a fixed post as opposed to an articulated one. MWPC have requested correction installation work to be carried out and are currently waiting for this to happen. DP (and PH) will monitor and report on this on a regular basis; when completed regular maintenance of the site can be restarted.
- **Hornchurch Road Play Area:** Comments have been received from users regarding areas of uneven surface within the play area. DP and MWPC staff had carried out a site inspection visit. It was deemed that the small areas do not warrant repair or pose a safety risk at this stage. This matter will be considered again.
- **Pathfinder Way Play Area** – DP reported that this has been named **The Davey Play Area** after a father and son of that name with a close association to the Bowerhill ATC (Air Training Corps)

Squadron. MWPC have bought forward some concerns regarding access through the barriers surrounding the area, particularly on the side and bank leading down to the attenuation pond. Correction work to meet safety standards has been agreed and the ROSPA report has been signed off. Handover to MWPC will take place on full completion.

At this time, owing to a technical issue, MH was unable to maintain Meeting Chair responsibilities. DR kindly agreed to take over as Meeting Chairman.

10) Wiltshire Council (Melksham Without South) report – Councillor Nick Holder

Report from NH: he thanked DP and reiterated various MWPC matters and in addition covered:

- **Speed Indicator Device (SID):** A new SID has been purchased and will be deployed in the local area on a scheduled programme.
- **Traffic Calming Measures on Bowerhill:** MWPC have been reviewing and their Street Scene sub-committee recently met via Zoom with Mark Stansbury from Wilts Council Highways & Traffic team. They reviewed particularly the area on Halifax Road adjacent to Bowerhill Primary School. The traffic congestion times are around school dropping off and collection. It was agreed that generally the traffic calming measures in place were fit for purpose. However NH reported that MWPC had agreed to make contact with the (new) Head Teacher (Rachel Skates) and request her to update the School Traffic Plan and liaise with the Council accordingly. A speed count indicator placement has been requested for a specific site on the non-speed hump section of Halifax Road.
- **General Announcements:** MWPC is closed for the week leading up to Easter. County & Parish Elections due on 6th. May. During the lead-up period (Purdah) Council activities will be restricted and limited. NH recommended postal voting as a sensible option.
- **Melksham Bypass:** NH confirmed previous comments that, at this time, no preferred route has been suggested or adopted during the consultation and report to date. He stressed the importance for BRAG to be aware of, and involved in, the next stage of the consultation process. There is still the question of “Bypass or No Bypass”. Wilts Council Highways Department still has much work to do, with representations to be taken account of. NH will continue to work on behalf of Bowerhill residents and BRAG should liaise with MWPC to ensure local views are heard going forward. The main thrust of objection should be the environmental impact on Bowerhill.

11) Picnic Area Working Party report

The following Email from JB had been forwarded to BRAG Members by MH 11 March 2021

(This is a slightly edited version of Jenny's report.)

Graham and I cleared up the site dragging lots of bird feeders, flower pots, etc. from the ditches and the drainage pond which the lovely little or big visitors had decided they were surplus to the site. We noticed some of the wheel trims are missing so when the flooded pond area goes down we may find lots of the missing items.

Our ornamental pond is still there but full of amorous toads and lots of spawn so when they hatch the blackbirds will have a good feeding session like they did last year.

It looks as though the actual Picnic Site is in dire need of new wood chippings, at least two large loads or more, so BRAG will need to spend some money on this so has our local farmer up the lane any? Or perhaps MWPC contractors can help us out? Can BRAG committee or MWPC do a bit of networking on this for us? I am happy to purchase the preservative for the benches on BRAGs behalf which normally I would do then claim back with receipt of purchase and a personal cheque to myself signed by myself as Treasurer last year and then a committee member (normally Pauline) but the situation has changed so Mark will you be able to do this now with me signing as well?

I have not told the NatWest bank of any changes as this would be up to the new Treasurer.

The cheques are normally signed by the Treasurer and one committee member.

We will be getting more bills in regarding fuel, etc. so this needs to be sorted out in the next month.

Graham and I will be popping down there again soon, weather permitting, as we have lots of plants to go in plus seeds so HAPPY DAYS are on the horizon. Cheers, Jenny.

12) Work for Parish Steward: No requests were forthcoming. It was agreed that if any members had requests, they should be addressed directly to TS at MWPC with cc to DP and RSS.

13) Any other business:

- **BRAG Notice Boards at the Picnic Site:** PSS commented that some of the content was well out of date and asked about key holders. It was generally agreed that JB held a full set of keys (PH has key for the second Notice Board). This matter to be taken forward.
MH to request that keys are returned to him.

14) Date and time of next meetings

- **Next BRAG Meeting:** Revised and suggested **Thursday 15th April at 7.00 pm via Zoom**
MH to send appropriate notifications/invites.
- **Possible AGM in the second half of May on a date to be agreed.**