

**Bowerhill Residents Action Group (BRAG)**  
**General Open Meeting – Minutes of**  
**Zoom meeting held on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup>. April 2021**  
**From 7pm to 8.55pm.**

**The meeting was hosted on the Zoom platform of Mark Harris.**

**Present - Current Committee members**

Mark Harris - MH	Dale Robinson - DR	David Pafford – DP (MWPC)
Pauline Shea-Simonds - PSS		

**Present – BRAG Members**

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

MH declared the meeting open at 7.00 pm and welcomed those present, as shown above

**1. Appointment of Minutes Secretary for this meeting only**

With no other volunteer, RSS agreed to take the minutes, dependant on Zoom recording being made available. MH thanked RSS and **agreed to forward the OneDrive/Zoom meeting URL web-link to RSS.**

**2. Apologies for absence**

MH reported apologies received from Pauline Helps (PH), Amanda Slade. Marilyn Mills (MM) was hoping to attend, subject to IT issues. Teresa Strange MWPC (TS) joined the meeting at 7.53pm

**3. Minutes of last meeting held on 11th March 2021**

MH thanked RSS for production of minutes, which had been circulated. DP proposed that these be accepted as a true record, seconded by PSS. Vote taken and unanimously carried

**4. Matters arising**

**Last Month's Guest speaker Paul Jupp (Meadow in my Garden)**

- SP has made contact with Paul Jupp and has arranged a site meeting with him for next Tuesday to inspect possible wild flower planting area (end of Brabazon Way).
- MH has had discussion with Jenny Butcher (JB) re areas either side of the bridle path down to the canal. It was suggested that this area encroaches on the Picnic Area Working Group (PAWG) responsibility. SP suggested that the responsibility for this should be left totally to PAWG. A discussion followed surrounding a suggestion from ST that the path verges be left unmown as grass would be better for wildlife and keep dogs to the path; MH - one mower width? DP - cut less frequently? PSS - a good area for wild flowers. CF - PAWG do a fantastic job. **MH agreed to have further discussion with Jenny Butcher to agree the way forward.**
- CF had suggested a possible link with local schools re a Bulb Planting Project. This was discussed and ST also suggested contacting garden centres for free bulbs. ST also recommended promoting the Blue

Heart Scheme for developing garden areas suitable for wild life (Melksham in Bloom) **MH agreed to contact Bowerhill Primary School. DP in his capacity at MWPC rep on Governing body of Melksham Oak Community School agreed to make contact with the appropriate person (NH - Debbie Steer?) in charge of Community based activity groups. SP agreed to approach local Garden Centres for free bulb supply.**

- MH has confirmed with (JB) her keenness to carry on leading the PAWG, maintaining the picnic area and pathway. Pauline Helps (PH) has returned her set of noticeboard keys to MH and JB will continue to update the Picnic Area notice boards.

### **Benches and picnic tables**

DP reported (as MWPC Rep on BRAG): Ownership of Benches/Tables to be clarified. As funding for purchases comes through MWPC as well as Area Board, it would be sensible for PC to take over ownership, thus becoming responsible for Inspection and Insurance costs. This showing a cost saving via VAT. A discussion followed, including about old benches and those on the picnic area. General agreement to ownership/purchasing suggestion/method. DP confirmed that the vehicle access to the Hornchurch Road Public Open Space has been re-instated. - **DP to further liaise with TS at MWPC.**

### **Previous Meeting Minutes**

MH reported that he had sent a copy of the (un-amended and now agreed) minutes to TS at MWPC and requested that the meeting approve that they be displayed on the MWPC website. This was unanimously agreed. **MH to advise TS accordingly.**

### **BRAG Executive Officers**

MH again drew attention to this matter from previous meetings. Initially no further offers forthcoming and a discussion followed regarding the need to follow the constitution. ST offered to stand as a candidate for the post of Secretary and the meeting thanked her. MH stated that, with a temporary Treasurer (MB) we therefore need a Vice Chairman to complete Exec team.

### **Best Kept Village and Melksham in Bloom Competitions**

The meeting confirmed agreement that BRAG would not enter either of these this year. Agreed to consider again next year.

### **Melksham By Pass**

DP referred to the recently published Non-Statutory Consultation Report, stating that it comes to no firm conclusions, with no further move towards defining any solutions. MH agreed, having read the report, that there were no clear cut answers yet.

### **Melksham Neighbourhood and Seend Parish Plans**

MH and NH reported: Seend Plan which incorporates protected areas of Giles Wood and the Picnic Area will be voted on 6th May while Melksham Plan will be taken forward to June or July.

### **Melksham Station Hub Café**

MH confirmed that this is open for drinks and take away snacks.

## **Planning Application for Housing Development South of Western Way**

MH confirmed no further news to date.

## **Neighbourhood Policing Team**

MH confirmed that Janet Gould is our PCSO. To be contacted as and when needed.

## **5. Correspondence**

No correspondence to or from BRAG reported, but MH stated that he had sent regular emails to Members since the last meeting.

NH requested that MH update the meeting with the generic content of response/reply emails. Are we (BRAG) moving in the right direction, etc.? MH stated that following receiving a comment from a committee member that another committee member (who has not attended Zoom meetings) had said that they did not agree that BRAG was doing what it should do. He sent 2 emails asking members "Is BRAG doing what it should do?" and "Is BRAG doing things that it shouldn't?" No reply has been received from the critical Committee Member, but generally those responses received have been nothing but positive. Everybody thinks we are on the right track and are doing the right thing; so "I was very heartened by that". MH thanked all who had responded positively and stated that he had received no negative comments. He stated he considered that was the end of the matter and suggested that BRAG continues on the way forward as currently in progress.

## **6. Treasurer's Report**

MB provided the Treasurer's Report verbally, alongside a screen shared slide presentation, the text of which is shown hereunder. The slides included a BRAG logo which had been designed by his Son; it was liked by all and agreed that it should be adopted, with thanks being passed on accordingly.

### **TREASURER SITUATION**

MB has met with Jenny for a handover. All documentation is handed over. Support may be needed until MB finds his feet. Currently pulling together a spreadsheet to collate all financials. MB has initiated the addition of MH as a signatory on the account with NatWest. The process requires the minutes from the meeting. Once MH is a signatory we can apply to make the account an online account.

New Signatory ^ Request ^ NatWest add signatory ^ Request to set up online banking ^ Request to change Treasurer ^ Meeting Minutes ^ Account Statements ^ Address Change

### **CURRENT FINANCIAL POSITION**

Recent committed expenditure (PAWG Jenny): Bark chippings - £50 Strimmer fuel/cord - £75

Expenditure Pending (PAWG Jenny): Paint – £30 Compost - £20 (DP provided final member approval for these, so they can now be paid)

Recent income: Wiltshire Council - £2511 (Ring-fenced for tables and benches)

Current account standing: £3233.63p (not including above expenditure)

### **FUTURE TASKS**

Bank account Signatory > Treasurer > Online banking

Check for competitive deals for public liability insurance

There were no further questions or comments: MH thanked MB for the report.

## **7. Melksham Without Parish Council report – Councillor David Pafford**

- DP referred back to the earlier item regarding Benches and Tables and sought clarification from TS. TS stated that the MWPC funded insurance carries a £250 excess, so it is not viable to claim on old benches. They and tables are insured in groups (e.g. Hornchurch Open Space), not individually. Benches and Tables are the subject of regular inspections.
- It had been reported, initially by RSS and subsequently by others that 2 trees adjacent to the entrance of Bowerhill Primary School had recently been cut down. Follow up with Wiltshire Council evidenced that this was as a result of an assessment by the Council Tree Surgeon, who deemed the trees unsafe. They will be replaced, it is thought by White Beam variety. A discussion on this followed with ST saying that White Beam is a native British variety (NH stating they grow to 15 m in height) and the need for the tree felling was likely to have been Ash die back. The meeting agreed that the tree felling without notice was unfortunate.
- The ground surface covering surrounding the child play equipment in the Kestrel Court Play Area has been replaced, with an excellent result. A much used play facility enhanced by this work.
- Essential work at the new Pathfinder Way (Davey Place) play area is still in progress, working towards completion of barriers etc.
- MWPC changes were reported: Prior to May elections, 3 Councillors "stood down"; Paul Carter, Paul Taylor and NH (in view of Unitary Council responsibilities). Bowerhill has 7 councillor seats and with only 5 nominations there will be no election in May. The 4 existing (and re-nominated) Bowerhill Councillors (Alan Baines, John Glover, Robert Shea-Simonds and David Pafford) plus one new one (Mark Harris) will be elected uncontested. The Co-opting process for 2 new Councillors will take place in June and DP requested that members pass the word round to gain interest from any new applicants. Information is available about the process and what's involved in being Parish Councillor.
- A discussion followed under any Qs or comments, about other Councillor vacancies (one in MWPC Shaw ward and those in Seend, Semington and Melksham). TS confirmed that it is permitted to be a Parish Councillor in more than one Ward or Parish, within the 3 mile radius, but is not recommended due to the amount of work involved.
- MH thanked DP for his report.

## **8. Wiltshire Council (Melksham Without South) report – Councillor Nick Holder**

NH stated that his comments and report will be restricted to comply with Pre Election (Purdah) restrictions and rules:

- Agreed that the unannounced tree felling was unfortunate and will take the matter up with the appropriate Unitary Council department.

- The traffic survey planned for the Western end of Halifax road is on track and scheduled to be done later this year.
- Following on from MH's comments about the planning application for a further housing development on the land adjacent to the current Pathfinder Way development, there have been no further responses. NH's observation comment is that given the objections put forward including those from Highways and his own from CCG, make this level of development unsuitable. NH will continue to stress that this land should be kept solely for commercial/employment development. Following comment from MH re the strain on services should a 70 bed nursing/care home be included in the development, NH gave a detailed overview of his activities with the Health & Wellbeing committee of the Area Board, which include:
  - A meeting is planned to take place after the 6<sup>th</sup> of May with the head of the County Clinical Commissioning Group. There is to be a presentation in July regarding the future delivery of Primary Health Care in the area. There will be a working party regarding the future of Melksham Hospital next year. Health Care Commission. The whole matter of funding, not currently as transparent as it should be (e.g. CIL and Section 106 monies??).
  - MH asked if there was any further news about the idea for a major healthcare centre in this area. NH replied that, while there was nothing specific, Chippenham and Melksham Hospitals are both included in the working party scheduled to meet February/March next year.
  - RSS thanked NH for all his efforts with the provisioning of Primary Health Care and hoped that we will have him to continue that work after the May elections. RSS suggested that Secondary Health Care provision within Wiltshire was also in need of development of resources. NH confirmed that he would continue to address the many issues within this sector (where he works within Social Care), not least among them the Wiltshire Council/ National Government levy and the anticipated 40% increase in post lockdown Mental Health support need.
  - MH thanked NH for his report and comments.

## **9. Picnic Area Working Party report**

MH reported that he had received a report from Jenny Butcher which he had circulated to members. Those attending the meeting confirmed receipt of the report which is copied hereunder:

*"The BRAG Picnic Area Working Party have spent a total of 93 hours up to and including yesterday's normal Tuesday morning meet up. The reason it is high is because Graham and I have been there most weekday afternoons as well as the normal Tuesday as there were a lot of jobs to catch up on. Work carried out has been strimming the paths around the site and trimming the two fir trees next to the old notice board so now you can see that we have a sign there as well as the board. Clearing the site of rubbish etc. plus retrieving items from the flooded ditches and natural drainage pond, which the vandals have been throwing in over the winter months. This is an ongoing project as some of the area is still flooded and difficult to negotiate. A new rose-garden area is being made, which will be helped along by some rotted horse manure from the ponies in the field at the top of the bridleway. Graham and I will be picking up some this weekend to take down to the site. Graham is making a newer and safer path near the drainage pond using up material held on site, as this was rather bumpy and a trip hazard. This is a work-in-progress. Sheila and I have been weeding the existing flowerbed areas plus I have been planting up new arrivals from my garden and plants donated by residents. Also, sowing seeds as each area is dug. This again is ongoing. Another ongoing project is the painting of the new circular bench around the old oak tree. Also, benches, wheelbarrows, planters and signage will all have to be repainted this year as this is normally done annually.*

*The woodchip saga continues. We had to cancel a delivery, as there was no room to off-load due to the number of parked vehicles. We have been told the moored narrow-boats will be moving on soon so all the extra vehicles that belong to them will follow them to their next mooring site. The River and Canal Trust gave them permission*

*to stay for an extra fortnight after the lockdown restrictions were eased on the 12th of April. I am keeping a close eye on this. Also, the fishermen's clubs are due to meet up again soon and that could cause another problem. Colin Bush has delivered the two 5-litre containers of 2-stroke fuel and the two drums of strimmer cord as approved by the committee. The total cost came to £75.98, which is less than my original estimate of £80. I will need approval to buy the following from Wilko – one litre of Ronseal Oak wood preservative/stain at £13.95 for the benches, plus the black one-litre tin which costs £15.00, which is used on the two wheelbarrows, four planters, legs of benches/old notice board and signage. I also need permission to buy compost for the above containers and for the new rose garden. This will come to a total of £19.15, which is for four 70-litre bags of compost. This will be purchased from Buildbase who will deliver free as I have a cash account with them. So total money needed to buy all of the above comes to £48.10 please. I will fund the annual flowers, which will be planted in all of the containers down there as I buy as plugs online and bring on in our greenhouse then, when big enough, I will plant out after the frosts. The Picnic Site has been well used over this last lockdown/year and is most appreciated by all that we see down there while we have been working - young ones, oldies like us, locals, holiday-makers, passing walkers and cyclists. So, though it does cost BRAG money and time and sometimes hassle, it is well worth it. We as volunteers love it down there, as do the visitors we speak to as well. Jenny Butcher"*

The meeting expressed thanks to Jenny and her team for all their work.

## **10. Work for Parish Steward**

No work requests made. MH requested members to forward any **future requests for Parish Steward jobs be forwarded direct to TS at MWPC.**

## **11. Any other business**

- **BRAG executive officers:** covered earlier
- CF requested consideration be given to solving her (sight impaired) difficulty in crossing Halifax road and accessing the footpaths leading to the Industrial Estate. MWPC to be involved? **MH agreed to arrange a site visit with CF**
- PSS requested an update re Bowerhill Artwork and signage. MH and TS reported it as work in progress with TS screen sharing the Bowerhill artwork and stating that they are agenda items for upcoming MWPC meeting, both for Portal Road and Pathfinder Way. TS also reported on installation of new parish notice board in Pathfinder Way.
- SP requested attention to 2 pictures she has submitted of dangerous areas requiring work. A discussion followed. **MH agreed to arrange a site walk round with SP**
- TS gave an update and overview (with screen shared images) of proposed installation of Bins, Benches and Tables. A discussion took place with agreement reached on bridle path new benches and second bin (from Portal Road to Locking Close), Hornchurch road area tables, bins and benches. The question of bottle burying (Hornchurch area) was discussed. Colin Bush has agreed to clear excess rubbish in Locking Close. **MWPC to action as appropriate.**
- Litter picking and Meeting attendance: **SP agreed to make personal contact and discuss with Pauline Helps and Jenny Butcher.**

## **12. Date and time of next meeting**

After an open discussion, it was agreed that future BRAG meetings would be held on the **3rd Thursday of each month, starting at 7.00 pm. Accordingly the next meeting, agreed to be AGM, will be held via Zoom on Thursday 20th May starting at 7.00 pm**

**MH thanked members for attending and declared the meeting closed at 8.55pm**