

**MINUTES of a Joint Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Meeting on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2015 at Crown Chambers, 7 Market Place, Melksham at 6.00p.m.**

**Present:** Melksham Without Parish Council: Cllr Richard Wood (Chair); Cllr John Glover; Teresa Strange (Clerk)

Melksham Town Council: Stephen Gray (Clerk)

Health in the Community: Nick Westbrook

Environment: Rolf Brindle

Housing: Paul Walsh, Selwood Housing (*from 6.27pm*)

Melksham Community Area Partnership (MCAP): Colin Goodhind

Business: Tom Roach (*from 6.20pm*)

**Apologies:**

Melksham Town Council: Cllrs Terri Welch & Richard Wiltshire

Adminstrator: Phil McMullen, MCAP

1. Apologies: The Group were pleased to hear that Phil was on the road to recovery and noted that he was currently in a phase of convalescence. Apologies had been received from Richard Wiltshire due to the French Twinning visitors arriving that evening, and from Terri Welch. No apologies had been received from David Way but it was acknowledged that he had previously advised that he would not be attending every meeting.

The Steering Group noted with regret, the letter of resignation from Deborah Hendon-Jones who had been the Historic & Built Environment community representative on the Steering Group.

2. Declaration of Interests: Colin's interest in MCAP and Nick's interest in MyCommunity were recorded as a standing item. Colin also declared an interest in the filming of the Open House event as his son had been involved at the event.
3. Public Participation: There were no members of the public present.
4. Minutes of the last meeting (held 25<sup>th</sup> March): Teresa Strange requested that the value and detail of all invoices that were approved by the Steering Group be recorded in the hard copy minutes to give an audit trail, and the minutes were amended to reflect this request. The Minutes were approved as an accurate record, with the above amendment, and were signed by the Chair.
5. Matters arising from the Minutes:
  - a) **Melksham Link (Wilts & Berks Canal):** John Glover drew attention to concerns raised about pinch points on the proposed canal route at the New Inn, Berryfield, where a new fence had recently been constructed nearby ahead of a house to be built. This was discussed at length as there were concerns that the canal route would not actually fit as proposed. It was noted that there had been inconsistencies from Wiltshire Council planning officers, some quoting the route of the canal and others stating that the canal application had not been decided on yet; the route was however safeguarded by the Core Strategy **Action: The Steering Group ask for clarity of the**

*route through the Neighbourhood Plan area, and highlight the area of specific concern at the potential pinch point at the New Inn, Berryfield.*

**Tom Roach joined the meeting.**

- b) **Letter of thanks to logo competition winner:** In Phil's absence the Group were unsure if this action had been done; to be clarified.
- c) **Launch event materials:** Teresa advised that the materials/stationery etc left over from the Launch Event were being stored at the Melksham Without Parish Council offices.

6. Payments for approval: Nick provided information on this item and explained that there seemed to have been some confusion as to who was taking on the task of setting up a website for the Neighbourhood Plan, and therefore could arrange for it to be done within the previously agreed £399.99 quotation for works. It was noted that invoices b) & c) were part of the previously agreed £8,500 works.

The following invoices were approved for payment, and signed by the Chair.

- a) MCAP invoice for tasks completed in March                      Inv 15/P/003     £406.00
- b) Melksham Assembly Hall for hall hire for the  
Launch event held 27/3/15 & 28/3/15 £275+ VAT     Inv HT774     £330.00
- c) MyCommunity for access to portal, website,  
Data for 5 surveys £399.99+ VAT                                      Inv 284             £478.80

Teresa advised that a hard copy of the minutes and approved invoices would be kept in a file at Crown Chambers.

**Paul Walsh joined the meeting.**

7. **Delivery Sub Group report:**

a) **Open House Launch Events – 27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup> March:**

Nick provided a written report "Report of Public Participation Group to April SG Group 29<sup>th</sup> April 2015".

Nick updated the Steering Group on the successful Open House launch event that was held on 27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup> March. Some people had come along on the Friday evening and then returned Saturday to make additional comments. Lots of contact details had been taken although not a true reflection of numbers as often only one member of a couple signed in. There had also been interest in the variety of stands present at the event, particularly the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust.

The room had been laid out with a theatre style area for viewing speakers (and subsequent film screenings). Boards were then set up in a horseshoe arrangement with discussion tables within. The first couple of boards had the SHLAA (Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment) Plans of the Plan Area which generated lots of discussion; and then a board for each of the Plan themes.

Sticky post it notes were provided for people to write their comments and stick on the appropriate boards. These comments had now been written up and provided some 27 pages of comments. Nick explained that the comments had been grouped under the 6 task group themes, with an additional 7<sup>th</sup> heading for the comments

relating to infrastructure and general things such as “we need the infrastructure before anyone builds any more houses”. Some comments fell under 2/3 headings, such as “they are building all around me but I still can’t get to a doctor’s appointment as there’s no transport” these had been put under both the health and transport headings whereas if the comments were more lengthy and detailed then they were split up and put under the relevant headings.

Nick expressed his thanks to all those who came and helped at the launch event, and reported that the Assembly Hall staff had been very helpful as had Alex with the lighting/sound and Roger with the filming which resulted in a good quality sound and film.

It was felt from initial discussions during the launch event that the comments fell into 3 distinct areas:

- i) Direct land use requirement
- ii) Implied land use requirement
- iii) General expectation or “wish list”

An interesting comment was that houses should be sited in the best direction to be able to take advantage of solar panels; it was understood that this had been adopted in other parts of the country who felt that it cut down on solar farms.

Opinion was divided as to whether the land between Bowerhill and the Town should be developed. It was queried as to whether people from Bowerhill had commented that they wanted to join up with the Town, but Nick explained that the comments on the boards were deliberately made anonymously so residents felt free to make their comments without being followed up.

***Action:***

- 1. Colin and Teresa to send the photos taken at the event, particularly of the boards covered in post it notes, to Phil to collate as evidence of consultation.***
- 2. The comments to be forwarded electronically to all Steering Group members.***

**b) Film of speakers at Open House event:** It was agreed that the film was too long and some bits could be cut out. Colin felt that it could be cut into two parts, one with the more technical bits and one with the more generic message that could be used at future consultation events; it was agreed that the maximum length of this film should be 15 minutes. It was felt that the play back of the film on the Saturday was really worthwhile, and many sat and listened for a while. The filming was well done, and will eventually produce a very useful tool for future events. Nick felt that it was really well presented and that there could be potential for the film to be used by others.

**c) Attendance at Community Meetings:**

Nick and Phil had followed up requests to attend Community meetings. One was about bus services where there had been an interesting idea for the Bath bus to continue on to the RUH (Royal United Hospital); particularly if the RUH Hopper bus was at risk; the bus company were now looking into this.

They had also attended two health meetings, one organised by the Area Board and the Melksham Town Health Working Party as well.

Other meetings to follow were with the Church groups, once the Election period was over, and with other groups in the pipeline.

- d) **Community Events:** Nick commented that what did need to be done quickly were further community events, of which the film and boards could be set up again, this was for the surrounding villages. A short, snappy presentation could be provided with the 15 minute film, with the whole event lasting a couple of hours to consult on local views.
- e) **Website:** MyCommunity were primed ready to set up a simple 3 page website. Colin suggested that the pages of comments from the Launch Events could be posted on the website.

8. **Task Groups: Next Steps:** Nick advised that he felt a framework for the Neighbourhood Plan document was required, to give some structure to the task groups. It would also be a good idea at the next meeting to revisit the Action Plan and timelines for the Neighbourhood Plan. Although the Health group was moving ahead swiftly, some of the other groups had not got going yet. What was clear from the Launch Event was that people were interested in getting involved but it needed to be task orientated, they did not want to spend time attending “talking shops” over a long period; it needed to be short and snappy and concentrated on the task in hand.

Nick mentioned that he and Colin had discussed the Plan with Angus McPherson (Police & Crime Commissioner for Wiltshire) whilst he was on a stand at the Melksham market the previous week and he was interested in the community safety aspects.

- a) **Health & Leisure:** Nick was happy to lead this group and had already attended some meetings on this topic and was the representative on the Steering Group for health. He had 3/4 people lined up for the task group on the health side. The doctors were interested in talking further and Dr Matthews was prepared to provide information but did not have the capacity to attend meetings. Nick was still looking for people on the leisure/sports side, and awaiting the police to advise on a suitable person for the Community Safety area. It was acknowledged that the group had a wide remit covering health and leisure. Brian Warwick was looking for a representative for the seniors and was also talking to people about finding a youth representative.

Teresa explained that she had attended a Melksham Local Youth Network (LYN) event at the Assembly Hall on Saturday, which had two groups that may be useful. One was the LYN which had young members as well as members from the local community and the Melksham Community Area Youth Officer, Ceri Evans. Healthwatch were also there who were conducting a survey into what the community thinks of health services, and had been at the event to specifically target young people. Teresa had contact details which she agreed to forward to Nick.

Nick explained that the difficulty with the young and elderly views were that they crossed over many of the themed groups; and for example the Transport group should have a separate survey for the young, and the elderly.

Colin expressed concern that the group were talking to a true representation of young people. Teresa explained that there was a living document “Youth Needs Assessment” that was continuously being updated with ongoing consultation at Melksham Oak Community School, street work and a planned stand at “Party in the Park” later in the year. Colin felt that the previous YAG (Youth Action Group) was not a good representation of the young people in the area as it majored on the Canberra Youth Club at the time. It was important to gain input from young people across the board. Teresa explained that the LYN was designed to be widely representative and included representatives from the uniformed organisations, from the skateboard park, from Melksham Young Farmers to represent the rural areas as well as others.

Nick commented that all the task groups were going to be talking to a variety of people and it was important to understand that some participants may have a vested interest; this needed to be recognised and the channels given to them. All contributions were welcomed.

- b) **Transport:** Nick suggested Graham Ellis to lead this group. Colin explained that Graham could not get involved in any more groups as did not have the resource to attend any more meetings, but had provided a name that he felt was suitable and would recommend. Colin to follow up and advise of the name. Alan Baines and John Glover were suggestions from Melksham Without as they both were on the Melksham Railway Development Group and used to sit on the Area 32 committee that dealt primarily with bus services.

Teresa advised on that on a recent Wiltshire Council consultation on CIL funding (Community Infrastructure Levy) from planning obligations it advised that communities needed to identify priorities for local transport schemes and it helped if these were included a Neighbourhood Plan. There were several of these pieces of information that the Parish Council came across and Teresa suggested that they were included in the minutes of the meetings as they arose so that a list could be collated and passed through to the appropriate task group for consideration.

- c) **Employment:** Nick had two names for the Employment task group. Mr Rousell, a local retail business owner of more than one company; and Colin Harrison, the Chair of the Chamber of Commerce. A meeting with the Chamber of Commerce was one of the next meetings to be set up. Richard commented that although retail was important it was also imperative that representatives from the industrial areas were also sought. Tom explained that the Chamber was retail orientated whereas the comments from the launch event talked about the need for a local skilled workforce. Nick reported that it had been suggested that he make contact with the local trade unions as useful consultees but Tom felt that there was no longer a strong trade union presence, only for the larger employers such as Cooper Avon.

Colin wanted to concentrate on getting a lead person, it needed to be someone with the time to undertake a piece of work within a relative short space of time. Tom felt that he did not have the capacity to take on the lead role of this group. Teresa advised of the Bowerhill & Hampton Place Business Initiative who's administrator was Phil; this was a group that was set up by Wiltshire Councillor Roy While as an Area Board initiative and met regularly with representatives of the local business from the industrial area. Tom confirmed that he was aware of the group and that a member of his business had attended the group in the past. There was also another member from the business community who had come forward at the same time of Tom but at the time could not commit to regular meetings as spent a lot of time working abroad, but may be able to assist if it was for a specific task over a short period of time.

Steve asked if there had been discussions with Cooper Tires. Nick was not aware if anyone from the employer side had been at the launch event, but there had been attendance by their trade union representative. It was agreed by the group that it was important that someone from Coopers was involved. Although there were newer large employers in the area such as Herman Miller and Knorr Bremse who were known to be community focussed, they were already in Melksham whereas Cooper were known to be potentially moving within the area.

Colin focussed the group back on finding a lead from the business community who had a good working knowledge of the business in the area; someone who had the time to spend on the task group but was deeply imbedded in the local business community. Tom explained that although he employed local people, he did not have dealings with other local companies, as the majority of his work was mainly export and no significant local suppliers and so therefore did not have any useful local contacts. It was agreed that the Bowerhill Business Group would be a good starting point to find a lead for the Employment Task Group.

Nick had also met a useful contact from the Job Centre who may be interested in taking part, he already attended the Health Forum as an employment representative. A local bank had also advised that many employers will second a staff member to a community initiative like a Neighbourhood Plan as part of their staff's personal development, and this was another avenue that could be investigated. A detailed brief was as important as finding a good lead.

The Group had some discussion about potential areas in and around town for development, the wish for Melksham not be a dormitory town but have a mixed economy and examples of what other areas in the country had done.

Teresa advised that there was a local business networking group that met in the Kings Arm on a weekly basis, and that they may also be worth following up. They have their own website and twitter feed, and there was the potential to go and talk at their weekly breakfast meeting.

***Action: To approach the Bowerhill & Hampton Place Business Initiative to see if there was a suitable lead for the Employment Task Group.***

Colin suggested that there was a need for a role for the administrator of the group, Phil, to have a co-ordinating role for all the task groups. They would do their own

minutes etc, but Phil needed a brief with regards to the co-ordinating of the groups. There was also a need to feed in information as identified by Teresa earlier in the meeting. Teresa explained that from an admin point of view there had to be a central point/person to co-ordinate and register/store all the different minutes and notes from meetings etc. The Malmesbury representatives made it very clear that evidence was required to be presented and had given a sample of how they annotated and filed documents as it was a very important aspect. Teresa understood this to be part of Phil's role as administrator and felt it needed to be organised and set up before the groups started meeting. Colin agreed, and this needed to be detailed in a brief to Phil.

- d) **Housing:** Paul explained that he was happy to help and support in any way he could be felt it would not be appropriate for him to lead the Housing Task Group. Nick reported that there was a representative from a Tenant Association who had registered at the launch event. Paul had experience of other Neighbourhood Plans, and the Housing group was a particularly controversial one. It required strong civic leadership to say "I understand what you are saying but we still need xx number of houses", that it was a difficult role and the Group may want to look at a Councillor for this lead role; someone who can deal with all the different groups; social housing tenants, private rent tenants, people looking for housing to buy. For example, people want to buy small, starter homes but developers want to build large, detached houses as they are cheaper to build and receive a higher premium. The best way to get people on the housing ladder is to provide starter homes, this worked better than government initiatives such as shared ownership. There would be disparate groups on the housing task group and it needed a strong leader who held the vision from the Steering Group, with civic leadership skills.

Nick explained that there was a movement among the Scottish community plans to dictate not the numbers of houses to be built, but influence when they are built. To say that no houses are built until the infrastructure was in place. Although it was agreed that the key element of the Neighbourhood Plan was to identify sites for housing to be developed, Nick felt that there should also be discussion about the mix of housing, and when it was developed in line with infrastructure requirements. An exercise to be done was to look at plans and identify sites for housing, transport, industry etc.

Teresa commented that if Wiltshire Council could not demonstrate a 5 year land supply then any developers could win at appeal with planning applications; therefore it was not possible to delay building of houses.

Nick suggested that the lead needed to understand the Wiltshire dynamic but could be from outside Melksham as it could get personal and a neutral lead would be best and may find it easier to hold those difficult conversations. Richard felt that it should be a Melksham person but agreed that they should be neutral. Teresa questioned if there were any ex Councillors that were no longer serving Melksham Town or Melksham Without but would have a good understanding and experience of planning and the areas in question. It would not be a 5 year term, but a one off task orientated role and so might be considered by them. Ex

councillors such as Sarah Cardy, Davina Griffin? Paul explained that the great thing about the process was that it throw up lots of great ideas but there was no point spending hours discussing something that ultimately was not permitted under Government legislation. Paul succinctly summed up the remit of the housing task group as: sites, design, environment, need demand, type and layout. Someone like Sarah who used to Chair the Town's planning committee would be an ideal candidate.

**Action: Richard Wood to approach Sarah Cardy to see if there was interest in leading the Housing Task Group.**

- e) **Environment:** Nick explained that there were a few people that had come forward such as Mr & Mrs Cardy, Shirley McArthur of the Climate Friendly Group. Rolf, the Environment representative, would be the lead from the Steering Group attending the task group meetings, but not the Lead of the group. Members of the Climate Friendly Group were discussed but it was agreed that a very clear brief would be required, and a neutral approach rather than an aspirational, ecological lobby approach. How to safeguard the environment whilst building houses and industry? What the environmental impact of development was? Putting these questions back to the other Task Groups was the starting point of the Steering Group who originally did not have a separate Environment Task Group. This seemed to be the best way forward. Rolf talked of other elements such as solar farms, cycleways. Richard added that it was also about creating a pleasant built environment with parks etc. Paul agreed; that designing places where people wanted to live was something that fell under the Housing Task Group remit; as with transport etc. John concurred that the housing group may wish a pleasant place to live, whereas the employment group may wish a "green" place to live; a balance was required.

Richard questioned if the environment was given enough weight if not considered by a separate task group but it was agreed that it would as it would be built into the brief for the other groups, with a separate heading for the environment. The Group could come up with their Environment Design Criteria. Teresa asked if the Scoping Report which was the Sustainability Assessment Criteria for the Plan, meant that there was no need for a separate Environment Group.

**Action: No separate Environment Task Group to be set up, but the Environment to form part of the brief for the other Task Groups. Individuals to be identified for the task groups.**

- f) **Education:** Nick reported that Steve Clark, Headteacher of Melksham Oak had offered the assistance of one of his Assistant Heads but unfortunately they were unable to assist at present as were undertaking other duties and were currently putting together the Academy. At the launch event there had been lots of comments about the need for a second Secondary School, with the site of the old secondary school George Ward being suggested as the ideal site. There were also requests for more vocational education to meet local industry needs. Nick explained that there had been warnings that Melksham Oak would be at capacity at 2017-2020, and at what point does the current school stop being expanded. John felt that the Plan was all about the future, and a site for another school should be identified even if it was not required for 25 years.



Teresa reported that there was useful details in a recent Wiltshire Council consultation on planning obligations that detailed the calculations used per 100 dwellings for children for nursery places, schools etc; and similarly for GP requirements. Without taking heed of these figures, the Plan would just become a wish list, and also would not have the relevant funding as these figures are the calculations for Section 106 funds to be allocated. Teresa to forward these details to Phil for dissemination to the relevant task groups. Nick explained that there was a problem with the figures as they were only indicative and the demographics of the people moving into the new housing east of Melksham did not match the calculations, with many elderly people moving to the area with complex health issues, hence the capacity problems the Melksham GPs were experiencing.

It was agreed that Steve Clark should be approached again. Colin and Nick spoke to Steve Clark about 6/9 months ago however a lot had changed since then, especially with the creation of ATOM (Academy Trust of Melksham). It was important to not leave out the Melksham schools that were not in ATOM namely Forest & Sandridge, River Mead and Aloeric. Teresa also pointed out that not all of the ATOM schools were in the Neighbourhood Plan area ie: Semington, Broughton Gifford. Representatives would also be welcome from Governors, PTAs etc. Questions to answer were; “where are the pinch points in the school”, “where is there capacity for expansion”. John explained that it was not only about the expansion of the existing schools but could be about new schools. Teresa queried if existing school provision would be suggesting another new secondary school as potentially in competition with the existing one, especially if they were now run much more as a business as academies. The group also needed to take account of nursery provision, college provision, 3<sup>rd</sup> age provision as well as school provision. The brief needs to include provision of existing and new sites for primary and secondary schools to overcome any bias. Governors were also suggested as potential people for the group. Teresa explained that the Extended Services had also been trying to source a list of all governors in the Melksham area. There was a contact at Wiltshire Council for Governor Services but it could just be for subscribing schools to that service. Having said that someone had organised an all governor event for Melksham and so there must be a list somewhere; Teresa to investigate further. There was also a Melksham Area Headteacher meeting held regularly which Angie Rawlings of Extended Services provided administrative support. There used to be a group called ASK who provided an information service for under 5s in the area that would be worth contacting.

***Action: Colin and Nick to meet with Steve Clark, Headteacher of Melksham Oak Community School.***

***Action: An agenda item for next meeting be the review of the Key Points for the briefs for each Task Group.***

9. **Draft Scoping Report: Action: Feedback to be sought from David Way on the draft scoping report, for the next meeting.**

**Website:** It was unclear if Phil had made progress with setting up a website, but it was felt that this had not happened. Therefore, MyCommunity were primed to set up a simple, 3 page website as part of the originally agreed fee of £399.99 with no additional charge being made. It would be somewhere where documents could be uploaded and stored. It will have both logos. It could have the comments and the film from the launch events uploaded and will need to have some sort of consultation piece too. There could also be a section to leave your contact details so you could be added to an email mailing list. Teresa also expressed concerns that the Steering Group meetings were not advertised widely for public participation. Although the meetings were advertised on the Melksham Without Parish Council website, it was not an obvious place for residents to look whereas they could be emailed details of forthcoming meetings by a system such as Mailchimp or MyCommunity's own version. There should be a place on the website for advertising forthcoming meetings, posting agendas etc. Colin felt that Phil was not intended to run the website.

The news to communicate from today's meeting was that the Steering Group was moving forward with 5 themed task groups, with the environment theme across all of them. Nick would release a press release as such and ask for people to come forward if they wanted to get involved, or to chair the groups.

10. **Date for next meeting:** This had been previously agreed to be Weds 27<sup>th</sup> May however this was difficult for some members, especially as it was following the bank holiday weekend and was during half term. **Action: The next meeting to be held on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> May at 6pm at Crown Chambers. Apologies were noted from Tom Roach and Paul Walsh.**

Meeting closed at 8.10pm

Chairman, 20<sup>th</sup> May 2015