Melksham Community Area Status Report - A discussion document March 2021

1. **Purpose of the Report**

   I. To present to members a status report that summarises the key issues facing the community area, including those arising from the COVID pandemic, which are the basis for discussion with local stakeholders.
   II. To recommend that the Area Board consults with partners and develops a work plan to address the issues identified.

2. **Background**

Every 3 to 4 years, Wiltshire Council's public health department working with key partners and organisations, undertakes a thorough analysis of the data available in order to provide a summary of the current and future needs of people in Wiltshire. This information is called the "Community Area Joint Strategic Assessment" (JSNA) and is presented to stakeholders across Wiltshire's 20 community areas.

Previously, the information has been used to help local communities in their prioritisation and decision making. A key feature of this has been a series of events to bring representatives of the local communities together so that they can be presented with a summary of the information and, through discussion, agree upon what should be the top local priorities to address.

In late 2019 and early 2020, the latest JSNA process was undertaken and a series of events were organised to take place from March 2020 onwards. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, these had to be cancelled.

Although, the JSNA data was released in early summer 2020 and can be viewed at https://www.wiltshireintelligence.org.uk/ two questions remained. Firstly, how can the impact of COVID-19 upon our communities be captured and reflected in the key issues and priorities within our local area? Issues such as mental health, debt, employment, young people and many others have been

adversely affected by the pandemic. Secondly, how can we enable the community to engage with this process and to feed in their own data, knowledge and experiences?

The Wiltshire Community Resilience Group, which has been set up to oversee one of the recovery strands, has been seeking to establish a better understanding of the impact of COVID-19. It has asked the Area Boards to help gather local information and concerns through the creation of a short "Community Area Status Report" to capture and reflect what the main messages are from local data and community discussions. A template has been produced by the Community Engagement Team and agreed by both the Resilience Group and the Area Board Chairmen.

3.   Process

Whilst each community area is different, and each status report will reflect this, there are elements that all have in common. These are:

I. A record of local data that has been obtained – information has been mainly obtained from the JSNA data but also includes other sources to reflect changes since the pandemic began.
II. A record of those meetings with organisations and stakeholders where consultation has taken place.
III. A record of the key issues that have emerged

The community engagement managers have led on this process and have tried to be as inclusive and as comprehensive as possible, including trying to capture specific concerns affecting BAME or minority groups. It is recognised that this report is not an exhaustive summary of all the issues and everything that is happening. It is a work in progress and as new information is obtained and changes occur, the report will be updated in response.

The overarching aim of this document is for the Melksham Area Board and its partners to understand where improvement is required and to see how, working with our communities, businesses and organisations, we can start to address them. The report will also link to the corporate work of Wiltshire Council, it's partners and agencies, so that collaboratively we can tackle the identified issues, including those arising from COVID-19.

4. Next steps

This status report has been produced by the Area Board as a discussion document for organisations across the Melksham community area to consider and build upon. No single partner has the power, resources or legitimacy to deliver economic, social or environmental change alone. This will only be achieved through co-ordinated action by the public, private and voluntary sectors working together, combining resources, and responding to the expressed needs and wants of the community.

Local authorities, agencies and organisations across the Melksham community area will be encouraged to consider this report and to ask themselves where they can make a difference and how they can support local action.

Following consultation, and after the May elections, it is proposed that the Area Board will produce a work plan outlining priorities for focus and action. Each action will have assigned to it clear outcomes and outputs, depending on urgency, opportunity and resources. This work plan will be a standing item at future meetings, utilising a traffic light system to offer a simple visual indicator to monitor progress.

Where issues are common across multiple community areas, the community engagement team will seek a more strategic approach across Wiltshire.

The Area Board will use its strategic influence and delegated powers to shape the delivery of local services and actions, working with local partners. It will direct its delegated resources to facilitate community-led projects and local initiatives that specifically address the identified priority issues.

It is recognised that some issues will be easier to tackle than others and so it will be sensible to target areas where tangible outcomes and progress can be delivered. Successes should be celebrated and the contribution from volunteers recognised and valued.

5. Recommendations

1.   The Area Board approves the Community Status report for discussion with partners

2.   The Area Board requests the Community Engagement Manager to work with key partners, agencies and community groups to consider the actions and resources required to address the issues identified.

3.   Based on the information collected, the Area Board produces a rolling work plan with priorities for action.

4.   The Area Board agrees to prioritise its resources and funding on those issues identified in the status report.

5.   That regular updates are submitted to the Area Board on progress made in relation to the action plan.

Report by Peter Dunford,

Community Engagement Manager

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March 2021

Background and Context
The overarching aim of this document is for Melksham Area Board to understand how to support local responses from communities, businesses and organisations and link this to the work of Wiltshire Council, it's partners and agencies, so that collaboratively we can tackle issues including those arising from COVID-19. The Melksham community area has seen an incredible response to the pandemic with volunteers leading the response and strategic partners working collaboratively to support the community. Every person within the area has had access to the services of a COVID support group, which continues to offer emergency support. As we now look ahead, this short document provides a summary of information that can be utilised to help inform the local community response. It brings together data and information sources from across the area that will help us to understand the state of our local community and the impact of COVID-19. It also highlights communities that may have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. Whilst it is natural to focus on the issues and problems, it is important to also build on the positives that have arisen during the pandemic. These include the closer working that has been engendered between organisations in these times of emergency; increased community cohesion; a boost to volunteering; and the wider use of the internet and social media. Since the start of the COVID pandemic the Melksham Area Board has been a founding partner in the Melksham Community Support group, to create a united community response to the challenges faced by people affected and self-isolating during the public health crisis. The partners in founding MCS - Melksham Town Council, Melksham Without Parish Council, Age Friendly Melksham and the Melksham Area Board –.are also the key stakeholder bodies who will lead the community recovery strategy and drive change on issues relating to the local economy, health and well-being, education and community resilience.

This report relates to the current Melksham community area and the 11 parishes of Atworth, Broughton Gifford, Bulkington, Great Hinton, Keevil, Melksham, Melksham Without, Poulshot, Seend, Semington and Steeple Ashton. However in recognition of changing demographics and electoral equity, a boundary review will be implemented from May 2021 which will see the parishes of Bulkington, Poulshot and Seend being re-designated within the Devizes community area and the parish of Atworth being re-designated within the Bradford on Avon community area.

Over time this document will be regularly updated in response to new information and new actions undertaken.

Community Data and Information

There are multiple sources of data that provide an excellent overview of the current situation within our community and that can be accessed to help inform collective next steps:

- JSNA local data sets – collected in Winter 2019 (https://www.wiltshireintelligence.org.uk/community-area/melksham/)
- COVID19 support group survey – June 2020
- Melksham Area Board activities during Lockdown, including weekly tasking meetings of board members held April - July 2020 and community briefings with the public held on 20 May, 17 June and 22 July https://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/documents/s180809/Melksham%20Area%20Board%20activities%20during%20Lockdown.pdf
- Area Board workshop held on 22 July 2020 to discuss COVID response and recovery (https://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/documents/s180807/Melksham%20COVID%20Recovery%20workshop%20220720%20-%20note%20of%20meeting.pdf)
- Local slido survey results from workshop held on 22 July (https://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/documents/s180808/Melksham%20COVID%20Recovery%20Workshop%20-%20slido%20poll%20results.pdf)
- Melksham Community Support website with service level data, community information, advice and guidance https://melkshamcommunity.co.uk/
- Children and young people mental health needs Assessment
- Gypsy, traveller and boater populations health needs assessment Wiltshire

Survey and JSNA data

From local survey data (WCC, 2020) the **Top 5 Priorities for the Melksham community area** were identified as:
1. Anti-social behaviour and crime – 36%
2. Highway infrastructure and maintenance - 30.5%
3. Access to health-related services and facilities – 27.9%
4. Waste and Recycling – 27.2%
5. Climate Change and Renewable Energy – 25.6%

And data revealed by the latest **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment** (WCC, 2020) showed:

Children and Young People - Education and Pupil Achievement: 57% of children in Melksham Community Area achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of primary school. This is slightly lower than the Wiltshire average of 64% (Percentage of key stage 2 pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and maths, Wiltshire Council, 2019)

Children and Young People - Education and Pupil Achievement: The average Attainment 8 score for Melksham Community Area is 40.8, this is lower than the Wiltshire average of 48.7 (Average Attainment 8 Score, DFE, 2018/2019)

Children and Young People - Education and Pupil Achievement: 11% of 0-19 year olds in Melksham Community Area are thought to be living in poverty. This is higher than across Wiltshire (9.4%) (Percentage of under 20 year olds living in poverty, HMRC, 2016)

Children and Young People - Education and Pupil Achievement: 92% of schools in Melksham Community Area are engaged with the Healthy Schools programme. This is notably higher than the Wiltshire average of 56% (Engagement and accreditation of schools with the Healthy Schools programme, Wiltshire Council, 2019)

Older People - Falls: The rate of hospital admissions due to falls for people aged 65+ in Melksham Community Area is 2,574 per 100,000 persons, compared with 2,135 per 100,000 persons for Wiltshire (Hospital Episode Statistics, NHS Digital, 2018/19)

Older People - Independent Living: The rate of people aged 65+ supported to live independently in Melksham Community Area is 40 per 1,000 persons. This is lower than Wiltshire's average of 45 per 1,000 (Wiltshire Council Adult Social Care Team, 2018/19)

Health and Wellbeing - Health Improvement: 32% of 10-11 year olds in Melksham Community Area are obese or overweight. This is higher than the Wiltshire average (28%) and equates to almost 1 in 3 children in Year 6 (National Child Measurement Programme, 2016/17-2018/19**)**

Health and Wellbeing - Mortality Rate: The rate for causes considered preventable in Melksham Community Area is 156 per 10,000 persons. This is higher than the Wiltshire rate of 147 per 10,000 (Primary Care Mortality Database, NHS Digital, 2015-2017)

Employment and Economy – Apprenticeships: Melksham Community Area has a rate of 87 apprenticeships per 10,000 people aged 16+, compared with the Wiltshire rate of 139 per 10,000 (Wiltshire Council, 2018/19)

Employment and Economy – Loans: The average estimated personal loan amount per person for those in Melksham Community Area is £888.52, which is higher than the Wiltshire average of £796.23 ()https://www.ukfinance.org.uk/data-and-research/data/householdfinance/personal-loans-within-uk-postcodes, Q2 2019)

Housing – Property Prices: The median house price in Melksham Community Area is £240,000, lower than the Wiltshire average of £272,000

Community Safety - Substance Misuse: The rate of alcohol related hospital admissions in Melksham Community Area is 2,028 per 100,000 persons. This is higher than the rate for Wiltshire of 1,827 per 100,000 (Hospital Episode Statistics, NHS Digital, 2017/18 and Mid Year Population Estimates, Office for National Statistics, 2017)

Arts, Culture and Leisure - Your Library: 27% of residents in Melksham Community Area are currently members of the local libraries compared with 34% across Wiltshire (Wiltshire Council, April 2019)

Arts, Culture and Leisure – Local Engagement: 1.7% of working people in Melksham Community Area are employed in the arts, entertainment and recreation sector, compared with 2.5% across Wiltshire (The Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES), extracted from NOMIS https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/ in December 2019, the data refers to 2018)

Issues

Children and Young people – Issues of childhood obesity, poverty and poor mental health are greater in the Melksham area than the Wiltshire average. The Childrens Centre on Spa Road provides support for some of these early years and parenting needs. Educational under-achievement at both primary and secondary level is notable, as is a lack of apprenticeships and higher than average youth unemployment rates. Anti-social behaviour, drugs and crime are continuing problems for the Police. Surveys show that COVID has heightened young peoples' concerns about their education and mental health, including increased feelings of loneliness. Improved facilities for young people, such as the enhancements at King George V Playing Field and at the skate park, are much-needed as are the positive activities provided by Young Melksham, including after-school and evening youth clubs, street-based youth work, support to young people with special educational needs and disabilities, and teen counselling services. Melksham Oak Community School provides excellent teaching, learning and pastoral care facilities. The development of a closer extra-curricular relationship between the community and the school remains "work in progress".

Older People, Health and Wellbeing – The need to self-isolate during the COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on mental health and has led to an increase in loneliness and depression among the old and vulnerable, including those living with dementia. Age Friendly Melksham and its team of volunteers has provided an outstanding service in difficult times, providing food, medicines, friendship and practical support to help those socially isolated at home. The GP surgeries continue to provide essential primary care and vaccination services. "Social prescribing" services such as Leg Club, Falls Prevention Classes and other care in the community will be re-starting as soon as it becomes safe to do so. A new programme of social, cultural and inter-generational activities is planned in community halls, care homes and other sheltered settings. The re-opening of social groups for older people, such as those run by the Seniors Forum and Mens Shed, will boost mental wellbeing. The Local Area Co-ordination service continues to provide side-by-side social care support to those facing challenges in their lives, whether for mental health, financial, housing or other reasons. Support for carers and young carers continues to be particularly important in these difficult times. Estates in Forest and Queensway, where residents face multiple health inequalities and higher levels of inactivity, are benefitting from the "Healthier Communities" project which promotes physical activity programmes such as running, walking, fitness and lifestyle classes for families on low incomes. The Melksham community campus, now under construction, will become a focus for many of these leisure and wellbeing activities.
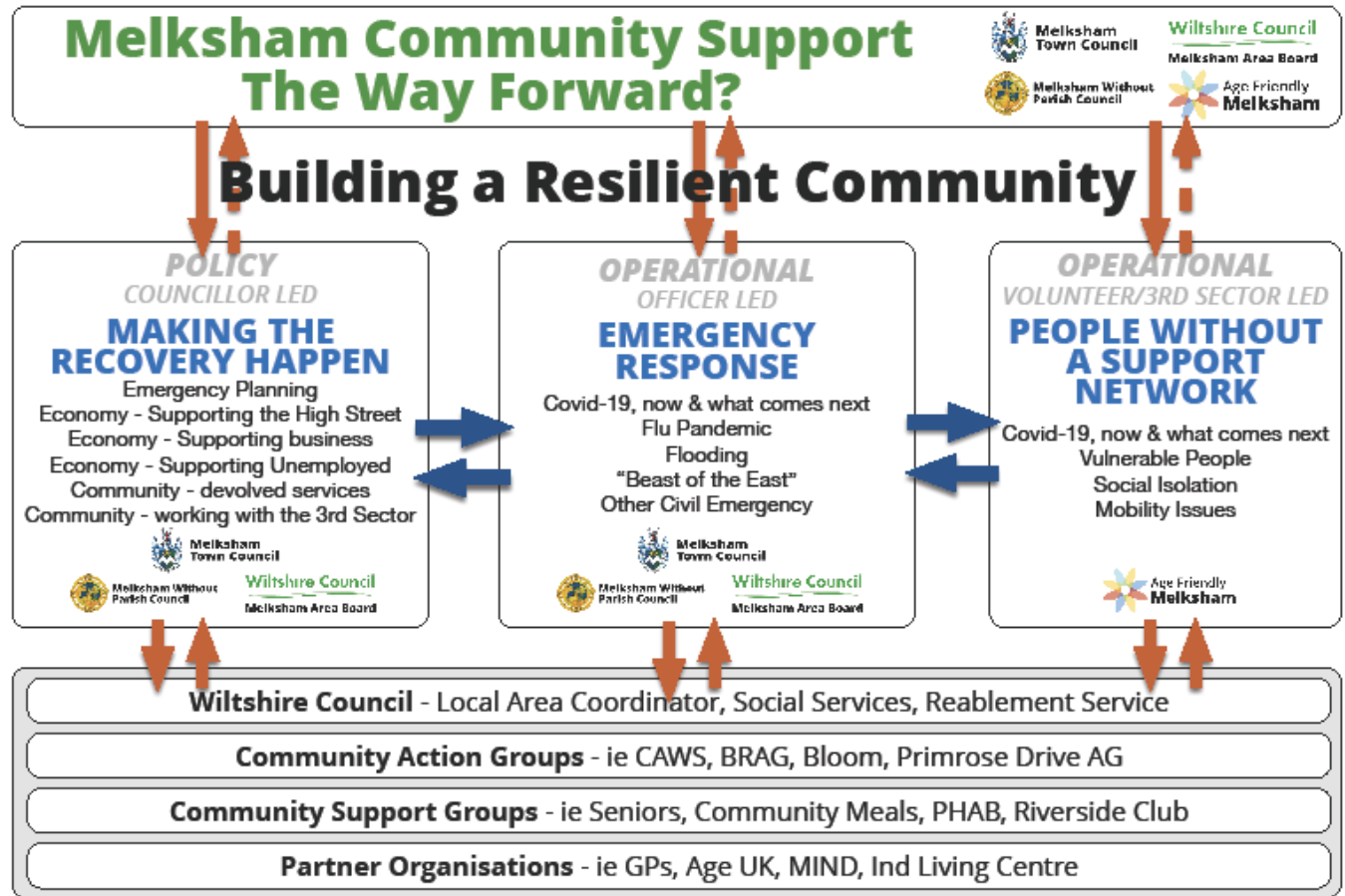
Economy – A combination of COVID lockdowns and the rapid rise of online shopping poses a serious threat to the viability of shops, services and hospitality businesses in the town centre. The Town Council is leading a programme of promotion and investment, which includes promotional campaigns through social media, as well as new speciality markets and events. Business expansion by Knorr Bremse, Herman Miller and others at Hampton Park has created new jobs locally and further investment at the Bowerhill Industrial Estate is in the pipeline. Superfast broadband is being rolled out to improve digital connectivity. Wiltshire College is working with local employers to provide tailored apprenticeship programmes and vocational training. The impacts of COVID on families with low incomes, as reported by Citizens Advice, includes increased debt and demand for employment, housing, mental health, financial and other support services. The Melksham Foodbank reports that client numbers have been increasing and that unemployment, reduced income, furloughing, and school closures have all contributed to families having less money and a huge rise in demand for food, both from single people of all ages and families that are really struggling.

Transport and Housing - Significant new development is being planned in the area - including route options for the A350 bypass and proposed site allocations for an additional 3,950 houses by 2036, including for more affordable housing locally. This will require sensitive engagement and dialogue with local residents and stakeholders regarding the potential economic opportunities but also the likely environmental impacts. The statutory processes of the Melksham Neighbourhood Plan will be completed and then need to be reviewed in line with the Wiltshire Local Plan. The Town Council has commissioning a "Priority for People" study in order to promote improved facilities and services for walking, cycling and public transport, including better connectivity to the railway station where there is significant investment in new rail services and facilities to support a growing number of rail users. The Community Area Transport Group continues to invest in small scale capital improvements such as new crossings, signs, road lining, drop kerbs, and reviews of speeding and waiting restrictions.

Community Safety – Close-working with the Neighbourhood Policing team continues. Regular issues include anti-social behaviour, late night disorder in the town centre, vehicle theft and drugs. A multi-agency CCTV Working Group is scoping a project to install cameras in the town centre, KGV field and skate park. The Town Council is leading an initiative against speeding, with 20 mph zones and speed indicator devices. Community emergency volunteer groups are active in responding both to local issues such as flooding and to national emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Environment – Wiltshire Council and Melksham Town Council have declared a climate emergencv. Investment in streetscene and countryside services continues, including waste collection, recycling, flood alleviation, rights of way improvement, air and river quality monitoring. A programme of service delegation and asset transfer from Wiltshire Council to the Town Council includes passing on responsibility and local control for parks, play areas, allotments and toilets. The local councils have committed to more urban tree planting; action against dog fouling and littering; a new country park at Shurnhold Fields; investment in new facilities at King George V Park; support to wildlife and biodiversity at Conigre Mead Nature Reserve; and support to the Wilts and Berks Canal restoration amongst other initiatives. A Steering Group of local people with representatives from Melksham Town Council and Melksham Without Parish Council has been working together for some time to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan that can balance new development with protection for the environment and this plan is now awaiting its local referendum.

Culture – The enduring community spirit and friendliness of the town and local villages is one of the area's biggest assets. In normal times, community venues and village halls host a thriving scene of local clubs and voluntary networks. Community activity buzzes through local social media networks and a range of arts, crafts, drama, music and sport thrive. The Assembly Hall is a popular and flexible venue, hosting a range of community activities, public meetings and major live acts. The Library is a focus for literature and family learning. The rugby and football clubs provide first class sporting facilities. The community has recently helped shape a public art project at George Ward Gardens. The community is generally welcoming to its minority ethnic population – mostly Bangladeshi and Turkish Muslims - and tolerant to alternative lifestyles such as those of the live-aboard boaters on the canal, although greater efforts could be made to engage with some of these hidden voices.

Melksham Community Support
The Way Forward?

Building a Resilient Community

POLICY
COUNCILLOR LED

MAKING THE RECOVERY HAPPEN
Emergency Planning
Economy - Supporting the High Street
Economy - Supporting business
Economy - Supporting Unemployed
Community - devolved services
Community - working with the 3rd Sector

OPERATIONAL
OFFICER LED

EMERGENCY RESPONSE
Covid-19, now & what comes next
Flu Pandemic
Flooding
"Beast of the East"
Other Civil Emergency

OPERATIONAL
VOLUNTEER/3RD SECTOR LED

PEOPLE WITHOUT A SUPPORT NETWORK
Covid-19, now & what comes next
Vulnerable People
Social Isolation
Mobility Issues

Wiltshire Council - Local Area Coordinator, Social Services, Reablement Service

Community Action Groups - ie CAWS, BRAG, Bloom, Primrose Drive AG

Community Support Groups - ie Seniors, Community Meals, PHAB, Riverside Club

Partner Organisations - ie GPs, Age UK, MIND, Ind Living Centre

A model of joint working - **"Melksham Community Support: The Way Forward"** - has been adopted by the local partners to manage the COVID response and recovery. The local response within the Melksham Community Area will need to be one of co-production, recognising that to rebuild our communities it is important that we work together, sharing information and resources where appropriate.

The identification of **Thematic Leads** will help to identify and network together local stakeholders who wish to be active within their themed area. Existing partnerships may be utilised, or a new group may be established perhaps using virtual networking. The leads will be responsible for carrying out investigation, bringing together work currently happening and identifying gaps. The Area Board will offer support and financial help where appropriate.

The 4 themes for investigation are:

i) Economy and employment

ii) Health, well-being and adult care

iii) Community Resilience

iv) Young people, education and children

A **range of stakeholders** will need to be engaged as appropriate from across sectors, issues and representing the needs of different groups in our society, both young and old. Key local partners include the Police, Fire and Rescue, GPs, HealthWatch, Age UK, Carer Support Wiltshire, childrens centre, housing associations, care homes and local charities such as Age Friendly Melksham, Young Melksham and Melksham Foodbank.

The **Town and Parish Councils** are the locally elected bodies and bring a democratic legitimacy to this work. They have close relationships to their communities and provide local forums for consultation and engagement as well as funding to help support local initiatives.

The **Melksham Area Board** has a strategic role linking the town and the villages within the community area. It joins local delivery with the statutory functions of Wiltshire Council and partners such as the Police, NHS and Fire and Rescue services. It is an accountable body with influence and powers. It has its own funding to help support local initiatives which between 2017-21 has provided funding support totalling in excess of £ 300,000 (see Appendices).

Priority Issues - for discussion

Based on the data and discussion to date, the "top 10" priority issues facing the Melksham community area are suggested for discussion with stakeholders:

i) anti-social behaviour and crime

ii) mental health and wellbeing in all age groups

iii) social isolation and loneliness among the old and vulnerable

iv) educational attainment, apprenticeships and vocational training

v) town centre vitality and investment

vi) deprivation and low jncome families

vii) childhood obesity and healthy lifestyles

viii) climate change and waste

ix) community engagement and consultation e.g. on bypass route options and proposed new housing sites

x) hidden voices and marginalised communities

Next Steps
1. The Area Board to approve this Community Area Status Report for discussion with partners 2. The Area Board to request the Community Engagement Manager to work with partners, agencies and community groups to gather data and opinion on issues, resources and opportunities for joint working. 3. Based on the information collected, the Area Board to identify priorities and a shared action plan with partners. 4. The Area Board to prioritise future resources and funding on those issues identified in the action plan. 5. Regular updates to be submitted to the Area Board on progress made in relation to the action plan.

Peter Dunford, Community Engagement Manager

March 2021