WORKING GROUP ON PARISH & COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEWS

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE WORKING GROUP ON PARISH & COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEWS MEETING HELD ON 4 NOVEMBER 2015 AT ASSEMBLY HALL - MELKSHAM ASSEMBLY HALL, MARKET PLACE, MELKSHAM, SN12 6ES.

Present:

Cllr Ernie Clark, Cllr Jon Hubbard, Cllr Ian McLennan and Cllr Stuart Wheeler

Also Present:
Ian Gibbons
John Watling
Paul Taylor
Jessica Croman

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1 **Welcome & Introductions**

The Chairman welcomed those present and introduced the panel.

2 **Purpose and procedures of the meeting**

The Chairman explained the reasons for Community Governance Reviews, procedure for the meeting, and that decisions on boundaries would be taken by Full Council.

Cllr Jon Hubbard raised an objection due to the inadequate notification of the meeting. A leaflet distributed by Wiltshire Council did not provide the relevant information and made no reference to the meeting date, time or venue.

3 **Proposals**

Maps were presented showing the proposals.

3a Snarlton Lane/ Thyme Road Area

Comments in support:

Alan Baines – Woodrow resident

- It's the fourth time Melksham Town Council have expanded into the rural parish
- Logical development of a growing town
- Boundaries should follow distinct boundaries – the boundary is clear here. The eastern expansion road is clear boundary although is does not have planning consent, If it had consent then logical.

4 **Whole Parish Merger**

Comments in support:

Bruce Sanders – Melksham Town Council

- The review is not about changing community identities as all areas will retain their identity
- The merger will enhance governance for the whole of Melksham and surrounding villages
- Currently issues effecting Melksham TC and Melksham Without are discussed separately and information is not being shared
- Melksham Without is not providing some facilities that Melksham TC can provide
- There is constant negotiation and the two councils are not working effectively and efficiently.
- One council can do a better job than two separate councilas.

Terry welsh – Melksham Town Council

- Rural buffer zone – always desire to keep the buffer zone
- Bowerhill is its own community, but Melksham has long established communities within Melksham and have built their own facilities. Eg Queensway community
- Communities can keep their own identity
- Melksham Town Council understands the needs of the rural communities
- Each area will have their own Cllrs to represent them.

Mick West – Neighbourhood Plan

- The Town Council and Melksham Without Town Council are composing a plan to keep developers away
- Identity of communities are crucial to the plan
- Other towns all have communities within communities but how are they represented? Some have decision making powers some do not

- If the councils do not join then the parishes are not big enough to be recognised because separately they cannot be provided with more facilities such as hospitals etc.
- Majority of people in the communities are new comers and do not understand where their council tax goes and do not care
- People want efficient services do not care otherwise

Comments against:

Michelle Tall – Chair of Cause for Whitley and Shaw

- The review is all about identity
- The councils can meet and talk about issues to make it work. Get people together. That is not an excuse to merge.
- Do not support
- Melksham Without do a great job and fulfil the needs of the villages
- Without Melksham Without our group would not have happened
- The needs of Melksham town would overtake the surrounding small villages
- People in the villages do care and that is why people are here at the meeting today.

Cllr Mike Mills – Melksham Without Parish Council - Bowerhill Resident

- Oppose plans
- Live in Bowerhill and have spoken to many people, no-one is in support of the proposal
- Solid community spirit
- The area was nominated as the best kept large village in the past and shows that people take great pride in their area
- The area has its own facilities
- Core strategy recognises Bowerhill as an individual area and planning has been refused based on that.

Teresa strange – Clerk - Melksham Without

- Identity of communities is essential – communities need to be effective and convenient for residents – should not be about saving costs
- If there is a full merger the focus will become town centric
- Villages should be utilised more and the Town Council do not do that.
- If merged then will the villages still have the same representation?
- A merger may be cheaper but will not necessarily be better for everyone.

Additional comments:

Phil Mcmillan – Melksham Community Partnership

- Currently groups are able to go to both Melksham Without and Melksham Town Council to apply for grants. Will the grant pot remain the same?
    - Unable to answer

Ian Cardy – Resident

- What will the representation of a whole merged council look like?
- Currently there are 15, would that be doubled? Or would the numbers be reduced?
- This is key information to amalgamation
- All areas need to be represented fairly
    - These are proposals put forward by the Town Council – if accepted then it would be necessary to re-ward the area. That is a separate exercise and would be looked at if that happens. It will not happen until Full Council decides on the merger

John Clover – Parish Cllr - Bowerhill Resident

- Schools and facilities like hospitals is nothing to do with the size of parishes but based on the whole population

5 **A365 and Dunch Lane Junction**

No comments

6 **Seend, Locking Close and the Canal**

Comments in support:

Chairman Bowerhill Nature Group

- The current boundary follows the old railway line and closed a long time ago
- It makes sense to move and tidy up the boundary
- The Bridal way is funded by s106 money by Bowerhill
- Bowerhill get grants from Melksham Without to maintain the area
- If we want any facilities we have to ask Seend for permission
- Want to ensure area stays a rural area

Teresa Strange – Clerk Melksham Without

- Melksham Without Parish Council current contribute a lot of time and money to the area
- Delighted to share the area and would Seend like to contribute funds?

Comments against:

Cllr Seed – Cllr for Seend Parish Council

- The Seend Parish Council met recently to discuss the proposal and the message was clear, we do not support the proposal
- The picnic area is within the boundary and so what, the whole area is for public use. The grant came from Melksham AB so for all people
- Other bridal ways are not shown on the map
- Charles wood was paid for by the Charles family who live on the other side of the canal. They are concerned that the land should not be split up. Want to keep it all in Seend. Charles wood should be kept in Seend
- Why stop on that bridal way? Why not carry the boundary along the whole canal? Because Melksham put a picnic area there without knowing it wasn't their land, but so what it's for everyone.

Tony Merch – Seend PC

- Seend Parish welcome sharing of the area
- No compelling reasons to change the boundary
- Fears of the land being developed
- Provides a rural buffer between areas
    - Boundaries have no significance by planning

Seend Resident

- If the boundary is changed how will Seend be affected?
- Melksham is growing which is making the villages worried
- Seend want a rural life and want to stay there not be closer to the growing development

7 **Land Between Berryfield Lane and River Avon**

No comments

8 **Close**

The Chairman thanked all those present for their attendance.

(Duration of meeting: 7.00 - 8.00 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Jessica Croman, of Democratic Services, direct line 01225 718262 , e-mail jessica.croman@wiltshire.gov.uk

Press enquiries to Communications, direct line (01225) 713114/713115