

Melksham Without South - Annual Parish Meeting

Roy While Wiltshire Councillor Melksham Without South

Residents concerns, many and varied, including planning applications, overgrown trees and hedges, cracked boundary walls, missed bin collection, litter, noise, benefits and of course parking I take seriously. Some I can help with, a few I can't. The Wiltshire Council's service managers and the customer services team are generally very good – but I do have some difficulty from time to time in tracking down the right contacts for hedges and trees!

I always say that I work in close partnership with the Parish Council and the BRAG. Often working behind the scenes. That is the way to get things done e.g. the transfer of the Bowerhill Sports field, negotiations for the replacement sports pavilion, the soon to be implemented parking restrictions along Halifax and the satisfactory conclusion to the long running community saga. We shall see a small housing development with a community area and a MUGGA - an all weather playing surface on Hornchurch , similar to that at Shaw and Whitley.

In the Melksham community, through the Area Board, surely it is good to see successful grant applications for our Parish, particularly through the small grants scheme (up to £350). We need to encourage more small groups/organisations to come forward. The major project is, of course, the Campus. The Melksham House site purchased by Wiltshire Council is the ideal location and this development will do much to help regenerate the Town Centre and benefit the whole community. It is much more than about sport. The library and youth centre will be relocated along with the Neighbourhood Police Team. Rugby and football will be relocated. There will be something for all, young and old. I work with a small, committed team (the SCOB) drawn and representing the wider community. We are all moving in the same direction. We have appointed the main architect and during the design process will be involving users and various interest groups. There was a presentation at the Area Board – the Melksham Picture – which outlined the development possibilities, which will impact positively on the Parish as well as the Town.

Wiltshire Council continues to grapple, successfully, with the economic constraints. Substantial savings through changes in the way we do things, procurement of goods and services and a slimmer staff have enabled

front line services to continue with additional resources for vulnerable children, older people and road maintenance. This was agreed, at the Budget meeting in February, along with the continued freeze in the council tax. Visitors to County Hall in Trowbridge will have seen a complete transformation of the 'new' part with the new library, the atrium providing space to meet staff, have a coffee or a meal .Above the refurbished open plan offices enable a very different way of working with hot desking, a greater use of IT, staff working from home. Improved facilities.. The old part of County Hall is also being brought up to date. This has all enabled the former District Council offices at Bradley Road Trowbridge and Devizes to be closed. This will be followed by the transfer of staff from Shurnhold .

One final comment – we must not underestimate the benefits of the former district councils and the county council coming together to form the Wiltshire Unitary Council. One of the main reasons why we have coped better than many others.