

Great Missenden Parish Revitalisation Group

incorporating Ballinger, South Heath & Heath End

Annual General Meeting

Tuesday 5 October at 7.30pm
Via Zoom, hosted by Colin Veysey

Chairman's Report

As this is my last Chair's report I would like to take this opportunity to reflect back on the journey the group has been on, that has led us to where we are today.

Slide 3- 2017 a new start

2017 saw a new start for the group, with a new committee, a new name, a new constitution, £6,924 in the bank and an annual grant of £2,000 from Chiltern District Council.

The group's first task was to create a strategy for new projects, based on issues that were important to our communities.

The Community Vision of 2008, CV4HP16, provided some evidence, but was somewhat out-of-date. It was time for a refresh, to check what in the Action Plan was still relevant and what new issues should be added.

Slide 4- Visual of website

By 2018, with Robert's help, we set up a new GMPRG website, so it could be updated and capable of providing Google Forms for a consultation.

Slide 5- Visual of Community Vision CV4HP16 and The Source article

This enabled the group to conduct a refresh of the Community Vision, not only on the website, but also as a supplement in The Source, Issue 53 with a form and explanatory 4-page article, delivered to every home in HP16.

Slide 6- Workshops

A huge amount of work was put into the project by the team:

- Conducting workshops
- Filtering through all the qualitative responses
- And presenting the Community Vision results on the website

Slide 7- List of priorities

The results of the refresh of the Community Vision provided a mandate and set the priorities for future projects by the group.

The top priorities identified were-

- Improvements to public spaces and the appearance of villages
- Public Transport
- Road safety
- Facilities for children and young people
- and provision for cycling

Also in 2018, the group participated in a consultation about the Haul Road, by HS2's contractor Fusion.

Slide 8- Wildflower planting etc.

In an attempt to create an attractive 'gateway' to the village, and to detract from the the Haul Road, GMPRG proposed:

- wildflower planting around the roundabout;
- road calming measures for traffic approaching the Link Road from the A413;
- new village entry signs;
- and that the unsightly nettles etc. along the boundaries of grass verges be replaced by hedgerows to create wildlife habitats.

Slide 9 HS2 train - CEF & BLEF Funding

By our last AGM in 2019 the group had identified the need to look at potential projects that might be suitable for an application for funding from the HS2 Business & Local Economy and Community Funds, managed by Groundwork.

As part of a committee of local groups, led by the Parish Council, looking at what local projects might be suitable for these funds, GMPRG, in conjunction with GMVA and County Councillor, Peter Martin, started to look at what improvements could be made to help local businesses and make Great Missenden a more attractive and welcoming place for residents and visitors during the construction period.

Slide 10 List of BLEF funding

Here are some examples of projects- note Public Realm improvements at the top.

Given the priorities set by the Community Vision, the funding requirement for projects to be close to the line and the need to overcome the adverse effects of HS2 on the village, the group set out to look at what could be done.

Slide 11 Great Missenden in need of improvement

What we found was as a result of budget cuts and lack of maintenance, Great Missenden has become rather tired-looking and in need of a face-lift.

Slide 12 Public Realm Improvement projects

So with the help of a Highway designer we have 'gone back to the drawing-board' to see what can be improved. As shown here, and demonstrated elsewhere, the use of more attractive surface materials, informal crossing places, decluttering and tree planting, can make public spaces aesthetically pleasing and a place to dwell.

Slide 13 GM Public Realm Improvement sketch

Plans were drawn up to improve the village centre, to increase footfall to help local businesses and make it safer by reducing traffic speeds.

Since then the group has gained support for the project from Bucks County Council's Head of Highways, Cabinet Member for Highways and consulted with local groups and the Parish Council.

The next stage is for the Highway designer to prepare visuals and details for phasing of work and costings to implement it. Once this is done, an Expression of Interest to seek BLEF funding of approximately £250,000 can be submitted.

Slide 14- Other Projects

Other projects in 2019 included a new group set up to look at Local and Community Transport. The group, led by John Cadman, embarked on a feasibility study to explore what could be done to improve services. John will update you on this.

Slide 15- Bike Parking

- These projects were to install new secure bike parking, to encourage more people to cycle. With funding from Midcounties Community Fund, Chiltern District Council and Bucks County Council Local Area Forum, three shiny new bike stands were installed at Prestwood High Street Car Park and bike rings at the Co-op.

Slide 16 – The Hump

- This next project looked at replacing “The Hump” outside Hamptons with a new planted feature, designed by local architect and committee member, Ken Brown, known as “The Egg”.

Slide 17- GM Visitor Notice board

- Due to the need to replace the GMPRG notice board in Great Missenden, and having been made aware there were signage problems for visitors to the Roald Dahl museum, plans were drawn up and approvals and costings sought for a new one.

With the help of Mike Wintgens of GMVA and Kim, the graphic designer at the RDM, the history and a map of the village was drafted, an illustrator briefed and artwork prepared. Despite a number of obstacles, due to Mike’s perseverance, the board was finally installed after lockdown last year.

Slide 18- Prestwood Mini-Park

- Following the removal of an attractive tree on the grass verge at Prestwood High Street Car Park by Buckinghamshire County Council’s Highway department, local architect and former committee member, Trevor Davison, created plans for a mini-park for the area.

It was originally to have three benches, a notice board and planting, but due to the arrival of the Box Moth to Prestwood; costings coming in way over budget; and the requirement of a planning application at the cost of £462; the project came to a halt.

It then went through numerous modifications and will now be just a new notice board, for parish and community notices, and a bench to replace one that was previously there. The original tree has now sprouted, so new planting is on hold whilst we wait to see what grows back. The group has also started to look into having an electric vehicle charging point in the car park, so there is no point planting anything until plans for this are known.

GMPRG also currently has funding for benches and tree planting awaiting a decision on Buckinghamshire Council transferring the Recreation Ground to the Parish Council.

Slide 19- List- engagement, delays, new perspective

The group has also engaged in many other local matters such as:

- submissions to Local Plan consultations, within which it was pointed out that Holy Trinity Prestwood and Hildreth's *are* part of the village, not a separate "hamlet", as stated;
- comments to local planning applications, particularly the proposed development at Great Missenden Station;
- and has also engaged in the ongoing discussions about car and bike parking in the villages.

All the projects were ticking along, often delayed by obstacles such as funding, bureaucracy at various levels and the need for more volunteers /or time to make progress.

But as we all know last year brought about a whole new set of challenges, caused by Covid-19 and lockdowns. Projects and orders underway were delayed due to company closures. Several members of the committee were busy focusing on Covid-related issues, helping the community through the crisis.

The question- "Should we still be doing this, given these circumstances?" arose. Meetings were postponed and last year's AGM cancelled, GMPRG went on hold from March 2020 until May this year.

The pandemic, the new unitary Buckinghamshire Council, the start of the associated Community Board in June 2020 and the climate emergency have brought about a number of questions about the way forward for the group.

In March last year the committee had started to discuss setting up a new Environment project group to look at issues such as recycling, energy saving, EV charging points and tree planting, with the intention of finding people interested in joining it.

But that all went on hold due to lockdowns etc. Then, by an enormous stroke of luck, Christopher got in touch with us in February this year. He came along to find out more about the group and joined the committee to head up the new subgroup and has since agreed to take on the role of Chair, to lead the group in a direction fitting for the times we live in.

Slide 20

So all that remains for me is- to thank all the committee members, past and present, and others that have supported me throughout my chairmanship; all of you for joining us at our virtual AGM; to draw the AGM to a close; and to hand over to Mike Johnstone to update you on the Cycling Group.