



Minutes of the Urchfont Parish Council (UPC) Meeting held on Wednesday 8th June 2016 in the Conference Room of Urchfont Village Hall (Version 2)

Present: Councillors: Mottram (DM – Chairman), Donald (BD), Mitchell (NM), Thomas (RT), Chapman (JC), Gibb (HG), Stephens (AS), Baker (PB) and Day (GD)

Clerk to the Council: Lunn (BL) **Planning Administrator:** Johnston (SJ)

Councillor for Urchfont & The Cannings: Philip Whitehead (PW)

Members of the Public (for all or part of the meeting): Emma Chapman, Derek Cook, Surrey Afelix

1. **Welcome and Apologies** – the Chairman welcomed all present and accepted apologies from Cllrs Holt (SH) and Hill (TH)
2. **Declarations of Interest:** None were declared at the meeting.
3. **Minutes** - to approve Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 11th May 2016

| Proposal | 1st | 2nd | Decision |
|--|-----|-----|--------------------|
| To accept and sign the minutes unchanged as a true record of the meeting | BD | NM | Unanimously agreed |

4. **Action List Status Review and Update Reports from the Minutes of the meeting held on 11th May 2016** – DM reviewed the outstanding actions listing, an updated version will be issued to councillors with the draft minutes.

ACTION: FC/49/16 - BL

5. Finance

a. To receive a Financial Statement and Bank Reconciliation as at 31st May 2016 – BL referred to the documents which had been circulated prior to the meeting. He confirmed that on current information assuming that all budget monies are spent or modified, that the reserve at the end of March 2017 would be £8,801. As no project proposals have been made to date, funds are still held in the project pot for allocation when projects are approved.

b. Approval of Annual Return for Year Ending 31st March 2016 – BL referred to the draft document which had been circulated prior to the meeting which covers governance, accounts and internal / external certification. BL confirmed that the internal audit had been completed satisfactorily on 6th June without any comment. BL explained Part 1 (Governance) and then Part 2 (Accounts) before seeking approval of the Annual Return which will form part of the external audit submission along with analysis of variances and other supporting documents which have to be submitted by 17th June. The Annual Return will be published on the website prior to submission for audit along with a Notice of Electors Rights to examine accounts during a specified 30 working day period.

| Proposal | 1st | 2nd | Decision |
|---|-----|-----|--------------------|
| To approve, sign, publish and submit the Annual Return for external audit | DM | BD | Unanimously agreed |

c. To confirm the insurance renewal from 1st June 2016 – BL confirmed that he had renewed the insurance for the period 1st June 2016 to 31st May 2017, including the addition of the Duck House.

d. Request for donation from Citizens Advice Wiltshire – The request for a £100 donation had been circulated to all councillors prior to the meeting. Discussion concluded that this was a worthwhile organisation and objective to support.

| Proposal | 1st | 2nd | Decision |
|--|-----|-----|--------------------|
| To approve payment of the £100 donation. | NM | DM | Unanimously agreed |

6. Annual Clerk and Planning Administrator appraisals / salary review – DM reported that he and BD had undertaken an appraisal with BL which concluded that he has continued to provide a high quality service and commitment to the Council despite increasing workload due to a number of factors. DM & BD recommended that he be paid an increased salary with effect 1st April 2016 in line with the NALC spine point scale 22, an increase of 26p per hour. Well done was expressed by all present.

Appraisal of and fee recommendations for the Planning Administrator will take place shortly and will be reported at the next meeting.

ACTION: FC/50/16 - DM

| Proposal | 1st | 2nd | Decision |
|---|-----|-----|--------------------|
| To approve payment of a salary increase to the Clerk in line with NALC Spine Point 22 with effect 1 st April 2016. | DM | BD | Unanimously agreed |

7. Lead Councillor, Working Groups, Clerk & other written Reports

- i. Lead Councillor Reports** – None were submitted
- ii. Clerks Report** – see attached report on the website, updates were given by BL under specific agenda items.

8. Update on negotiations / issues with WC:

- i. PROW to Playing Field** – Nothing to report. BD stated that he will be seeking a progress review.
- ii. Playing Field CAT (Western End)** – Further to that reported in the Clerks Report (attached on website), BL reported that he had just received the updated draft Transfer Deed from the UPC solicitor which seeks to address the issues highlighted in his written report. This document will now be reviewed before submission to WC for agreement, hopefully paving the way for signature in the near future.
- iii. Playing Field Proposal (Eastern End)** – Consideration of Council position to be reviewed post completion of the CAT of the western end of Playing Field – see Clerks Report attached on website.

9. Urchfont Picnic Site – BL confirmed that the MOD solicitor had rejected negotiation on the terms of the very detailed and complex lease. BL and the UPC solicitor had both expressed concerns about environmental contamination risks / insurance in particular, maintenance obligations, use definitions and policing a site which is situated at a distance from the Village and is accessed by the public generally. Although we are not aware of previous contamination / accidents / damage, potential risks and costs (over and above the lease itself) for the Parish Council appear to outweigh the benefits of the site for the community.

The Chairman closed the meeting for public participation

Emma Chapman, a Director of Wiltshire Wildlife Trust (WWT), confirmed that BL had approached her to see whether the site could be the subject of a joint lease with WWT. Unfortunately the site is not the right type of land for WWT interests; this even taking account of adjoining land including the wildlife ponds. WWT had recently taken on a similar but more appropriate MOD site which is now subject of environmental insurance costing £17k over the next 5 years to cover potential environmental contamination issues. As a result she fully recognises the concerns identified by BL in trying to balance risk / cost with the any benefits of taking on the lease.

The Chairman re-opened the Council meeting

It was confirmed by PW that the lease with WC had not been renewed for the last three years but the site continues to be used by members of the general public unaware of ownership arrangements. Councillors questioned what will happen in future if the lease is not renewed by anyone, but debate confirmed a general reluctance to proceed.

| Proposal | 1st | 2nd | Decision |
|---|------------|------------|--------------------|
| To reject the lease based on current terms and rejection of further negotiation by MOD to mitigate some of the perceived risks. | BD | GD | Unanimously agreed |

10. Future Viability of the Community Shop – HG reiterated facts from the report on shop business figures she had circulated earlier which indicated that the shop turnover is significantly down on previous years and tends to be reliant on sales of newspapers. Councillors expressed concern that this fundamental facility for the Village is not being supported enough by the community and wished to try and encourage more usage to protect its long term viability. Councillors recognised that competition from supermarket home delivery services has noticeably increased, the close proximity of other outlets (e.g. Planks Farm Shop) and use of the Community Bus to visit Devizes and other shopping centres. Inevitably the question comes back to whether the shop stocks what people want to buy, it was suggested that perhaps an updated survey is warranted to help identify local customer needs. PW suggested that interaction with the All Cannings Community Shop may be useful, this shop appears to be increasing its business significantly albeit with differing influencing factors. It was agreed that HG should take this suggestion back to the Shop for consideration. BL to include an item in the Parish Council article in Redhorn News encouraging increased usage of the Urchfont Shop.

ACTION: FC/51/16 – HG

ACTION: FC/52/16 - BL

11. Rat Problems in and around Pond Green – RT said that there was little to report except to confirm that rats have been seen in and around the pond and pond wall, in particular during the Scarecrow Festival weekend. It is hoped that any repairs to the pond wall would discourage rats, use of poisons around the area could be a hazard for the public and animals. DM asked RT to contact WC Environmental Services as a matter of urgency to see whether there is anything that they can do.

ACTION: FC/53/16 - RT

12. Section 106 Project – AS confirmed that a revised quote had been received from Playdale which is just within the fund available from WC, but this on the basis that some work will have to be done by local resources and does not include the aerial slide. As such, Geoff Potter has kindly agreed to remove the slide

and the earth mound. No work has been done to identify match funding to date, preference is for the current project to go ahead as soon as possible to avoid further increases in price or reductions in specification. If an order is placed shortly, work could be completed before the start of the school autumn term, this must be considered a major factor. AS thanked his team for the work they had done on this project, in particular Emma Beaumont. DM expressed concern that an opportunity will be missed if match funding is not secured before the current Section 106 funding is spent, normally a precondition of match funding. Whilst additional CIL funds and/or other grants may eventually become available, this will inevitably delay selection / installation of additional equipment such as the aerial slide and fitness trail along the pathway to Oakfrith Wood. PB suggested that he may be able to offer some quick assistance on match funding.

| Proposal | 1st | 2nd | Decision |
|--|------------|------------|--------------------|
| Approval to be given to proceed with order of the Playdale quoted equipment with immediate effect whilst at the same time DM/PB seeking match funding opportunities. | NM | RT | Unanimously agreed |

13. Farmers Field – deferred to the July meeting

14. Neighbourhood Plan - DM reported that the examiner’s review is still on target to commence on 23rd June 2016.

15. Manor Farmyard – JC reported that there are ongoing teething problems with waste collection (e.g. missed collections) from the site, although WC being responsive and hopefully this will be resolved shortly. DM noted that the roof timbers were now in evidence on Plot 19. At the request of No 1 Manor Farm Yard residents, RT reported that he had examined the ash tree on Pond Green (registered village green) which is overhanging their property. Some work is needed on which he will seek advice from the WC Tree Officer as it is in the conservation area, funding will be needed if works are authorised. BD asked whether the WC Tree Officer could be asked to undertake the promised Village walkabout to identify potential tree works, RT to ask when contacting him about the ash tree. BL reported that SH had requested an update from Redcliffe Homes regarding the promised upgrade of the driveway across Pond Green to No 1 Manor Farmyard to prevent flooding, a response is awaited.

16. Best Kept Village Competition – JC reported that the last time Urchfont took part in this competition was in 2005 when it won best medium village. He is a CPRE judge for this competition, there are several others in the Village who are or have been judges in the past who could provide advice and experience. JC believed that Urchfont would now be classed in the large village category and that a lot of work and commitment would have to be undertaken from now to get the Village ready for entry into the 2017 competition. Some councillors questioned whether the 2018 competition would be better to allow preparation and involvement of the many organisations in the community, including the school. However, it was agreed that JC should write an article for the July edition of Redhorn News seeking expressions of interest, commitment and involvement for the 2017 Competition.

ACTION: FC/54/16 - JC

17. Update on Current Parish Issues not covered by above agenda items

i. Vandalism in Urchfont (on or around 28th May)

DM reported that several acts of vandalism had occurred over this bank holiday period, damage to pond at the Baish, house signs removed (two confessions have been made), a convex mirror was removed by subsequently returned and fire hydrant signs were damage

The Chairman closed the meeting for public participation

Derek Cook stated that the pond and surrounding area is intended for the enjoyment of the community, many people walk through the area on a regular basis. On this occasion the overflow pipe was significantly damaged and the pond at the Baish drained as a result. This act would have caused a sudden overwhelming rush of water, the culprits would have inevitably gone home very wet and muddy. The act had a significant impact on wildlife in and around the pond, mallards and nesting moorhens were disturbed, frogs and tadpoles lost from the pond. Indications are that the damage was caused by children, size 4 or 5 footprints were found in the area. Martin Bodman came to the rescue by replacing the overflow pipe. The Chair of School Governors has been approached regarding the possible involvement of Urchfont School children, but disappointingly has not yet responded maybe because she was away. Emma Chapman, an Urchfont School Governor, agreed to follow this up. The Rural Police Team have been involved in this very disappointing and upsetting incident for the community. Derek Cook expressed his thanks for the support of the community.

(Post Meeting Note: It is understood that, on return from holiday, the Chairman of School Governors contacted Derek Cook as requested.)

The Chairman re-opened the Council Meeting

Councillors expressed concern over this act of vandalism and asked that their disappointment and support to find the culprits should be included in the next Redhorn News article from the Parish Council.

ACTION: FC/55/16 - BL

- ii. **Dog Waste** – DM reported that this issue has been attracting a lot of correspondence and concern recently, this despite the responsible attitude of most dog owners in the community. BL confirmed that standing notices in this respect are on the website and that he regularly puts articles in Redhorn News to encourage irresponsible dog owners to 'bag it and bin it'. BL has put additional WC notices on litter bins and other places warning of fines, but many of these are regularly removed. There are hot spots in the community, notably the pathway to Planks Farm. Councillors believed that the majority of waste that is not removed is from larger dogs by the size of the faeces and that much is caused by a few irresponsible owners letting their dogs roam loose to do their business at night before bedtime. GD suggested that as dog fouling is a criminal offence, then parishioners who observe it should try to overcome their British reticence and report it to the authorities. Others suggested that UPC should perhaps promote a 'name and shame' campaign. PW confirmed that a £1000 fine currently exists if an offence can be proved, not easy, and that new legislation is due in the autumn that will require all dog owners to carry plastic bags whenever they are out with their dogs. BL was asked to put another reminder in the July edition of Redhorn News including reference to the new legislation.

ACTION: FC/56/16 – BL

- iii. **Snakes** – DM reported that a pet snake that escaped from a local house several months ago is still loose. The snake is an Okeetee Corn Snake and, we are advised, is considered harmless.

- iv. **Works to bank on Top Green** – RT reported that works to create an opening in the bank on Top Green to provide easier access to the School have been completed by Martin Bodman. Temporary fencing is still in place to allow the grass to re-grow.

- v. **Dog Attack Update** – DM reported that he had now had the opportunity to talk to the person who witnessed the attack on the pathway to Oakfrith Wood which was reported in the May edition of Redhorn News. He confirmed that this was a serious attack which could have been worse if he had not been able to intervene, he also confirmed the owner of the attacking dog. PB advised that his dog had also been attacked by the same dog on the path. DM was now of the view that UPC should write to the owner in question with a copy to the WC Dog Warden.

ACTION: FC/57/16 – DM/BL

18. External Meetings – None to report

19. Councillors' Reports and Items for Future Agenda – two items were identified as follows:

- i. **Cemetery Working Party (NM)** – It was agreed that this would be held on Saturday 9th July 2016 commencing at 10am. BL to issue reminder to councillors and put article in Redhorn News.

ACTION: FC/58/16 - BL

- ii. **Fly Posting (PW)**

Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 13th July 2016 in Urchfont Village Hall Conference Room commencing at 7.00pm

Meeting Closed at 9:25pm

Draft minutes prepared by Bob Lunn, Clerk to the Council 12th June 2016

WRITTEN REPORTS – JUNE 2016

a. Clerks Report

- i. **Playing Field CAT (Western End)** – An update since receiving the draft CAT Transfer Deed from WC reported at the last meeting:
 - WC Officers have rejected my proposal to incorporate the 'right of access for maintenance vehicles over WC retained land' (highlighted in brown on the Deed plan) into the CAT Transfer. This basically on the grounds that this area is part of the playing field which is said to be regularly used by the School and as such would be the subject of the application to Secretary of State.
 - The draft Deed currently implies that there is no access for the public / pedestrians across the retained WC playing field area at any time. I have instructed the UPC solicitor to incorporate into the Transfer Deed the fact that pedestrian access is only restricted over the WC retained part (including the football pitch) during School operational hours. At all other times the whole playing field is available for public community use (excluding dogs).
 - I have requested that WC pay for the required new pedestrian gate to be installed into the Path to Oakfrith Wood fence to provide pedestrian access into the CAT / recreation area (remember that there is no fence between the CAT area and the WC retained area) during School operational hours, especially as they are barring access across the WC retained land. I have not received a response on this, this gate may become a UPC project!
 - The UPC solicitor and I have agreed to amend wording in a number of other sections in the draft Deed to minimise restrictions and to better define usage.

At the time of writing, the Deed is currently being redrafted before submission to WC for their agreement.

- ii. **Playing Field Proposal (Eastern End)** – As reported at the last meeting, the WC solicitor is suggesting that the proposed application to the Secretary of State for Education will now not be submitted due mainly to the belief that public consultation, which would have to be conducted by the Parish Council, would meet objections from the School and local Education Authority. As agreed at the last meeting, further consideration on this will be put on hold until the CAT of the western end is finalised.
- iii. **Lease for Urchfont Picnic Site** – The MOD solicitor has stated that the lease document as it stands is not negotiable, despite the concerns raised by the UPC solicitor and myself. On this basis I intend to seek Council guidance at the June meeting on whether you are prepared to take on this lease balancing the benefits of the site to the community against the potentially significant risks and maintenance / policing requirements.
- iv. **Manor Farm Yard – Waste Collections** – The first collection from within Manor Farmyard was made on 20th May 2016. Unfortunately the collection vehicle took out the leading edge of the bund outside the site, WC have accepted responsibility and will be repairing the damage.

- v. **Annual Shredder / Chipper Service** – I have made arrangements for this service for the disposal of tree branches and other woody garden material to be provided during the morning of MONDAY 24th OCTOBER 2016 at Urchfont Playing Field. This is during the School half term break.

Bob Lunn