



DRAFT Minutes of the Urchfont Parish Council (UPC) FC Meeting held on Wednesday 8th January 2020 in the Village Hall.

Present: Councillors: Day (GD – Chairman), Botham (MB – Vice Chairman), Hill (TH), Cowen (LC), Cottell (PC), Creasey (GC), Kemp (MK), Hollyman (MH), Stevens (DS), Cottle (SC), Kinnaird (LK)

Clerk to the Council: Lunn (BL)

Councillor for Urchfont & The Cannings: Whitehead (PW)

Members of the Public (for all or part of the meeting): Mr Bill Donald, Mr Peter Cook, Mr Paul Scarffe, Ms N Hammond, Mrs B Potter, Mrs C Cannon, Mr Malcolm Taylor, Mrs P Cridland

1. Welcome by the Chairman – GD welcomed all to the meeting, hoped that they had all had a good Christmas and wished them all the best for 2020.

2. Apologies – None, all councillors present.

B. PLANNING – No applications to consider. However, BL pointed out that he is now receiving new applications with consultation end dates prior to the next scheduled UPC meeting on 12th February 2020. He has requested extensions but if not agreed he may have to call an interim planning meeting.

C. FULL COUNCIL MEETING

1. Declarations of Interest – PC registered a non-pecuniary interest in item 5c.

2. Time set aside for Public Participation and External Reports

The Chairman closed the meeting for public participation

Mrs Cridland read out an abridged statement (full statement and copies of notices had been distributed to all councillors prior to the meeting) emphasising the effect on the health and well-being of her family members caused by perceived harassment from an anonymous neighbour by the placing of notices on a van owned by her son which is parked in The Orchard. The van is fully legal and entitled to park on the public highway. This harassment has been going on for a long time and she would welcome anything that UPC can do to resolve the issue. GD advised that this is not a matter for UPC. TH confirmed that it is more appropriate to the Community Policing Team if the harassment continues, they will be able to clarify the position with the alleged harasser. PW advised that WC has an anti-social behaviour team who might also be able to help, if she so wishes Mrs Cridland should contact him to start the process.

Mr Donald, as recently-appointed Treasurer of the Community Bus Committee, spoke about the need to reduce costs of this non-profit making organisation. A new bus has just been purchased at a cost in excess of £50k, but reducing passenger numbers mean that any surplus funds should be held for new equipment and running costs. In this respect he finds it difficult to justify the continued contribution of £450 (two month share of costs to provide free copies of Redhorn News to all households in the Parish) per annum when income is currently only around £1100. He is, therefore, seeking to offload this contribution to another organisation within the community such as the Parish Council or Scarecrow Committee. Mr Cook thanked Mr Donald for his comments and confirmed that passenger numbers had dropped significantly since it was decided to contribute to Redhorn several years ago. Mr Scarffe confirmed that UPC currently contributes 6 months (i.e. half a year) of the costs of supplying 550 copies of Redhorn News at a cover price of £5 to be distributed to all households in the Parish. He also confirmed that UPC had agreed this level of funding for a minimum of 2 years at its meeting in December 2018. Scarecrow (4 months) and the Urchfont Bus (2 months) supply the balance of the funding. In response to a question from GD, Bill Donald stated that the Community Bus Committee had not been party to the 2 year agreement and that they had paid the

2019 contribution in December 2019. Mrs Potter suggested that maybe some sort of fund raising scheme in the community could be adopted to resolve the situation

Mr Cook reiterated concerns expressed in his recent email (copied to all councillors prior to the meeting) about the potential significant cost of the proposed new footpath in Crooks Lane which he strongly believed should not be funded by the Parish Council, this should be organised and funded by WC in association with the developer. He was of the view that the whole community should not have to contribute to any costs associated with this project via significantly increased Parish Precept.

Although she had not been able to gain access to the minutes of the December meeting containing the written report on the Community Shop, Ms Hammond (as a shop volunteer) stated that she had received a number of comments expressing concern that such reports could damage the shop. People who need the shop most are those without transport and the elderly who find that the shop provide just what they need when they need it. The suggestion that the shop should be stocked with high end goods is not the answer. (Note: an updated report appears in the appendix to these minutes on the website and representatives from the shop will be giving a presentation at the February meeting)

The Chairman re-opened the Council meeting.

3. Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 11th December 2019

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
To approve and sign the minutes unchanged as a true and accurate record of the meeting	GD	LC	AGREED with three abstentions due to absence

4. Action List Status Review and Update Reports from the Minutes of the meeting held on 11th December 2019

- i. **Update Reports 11th December Minutes Item 11** – an email had been received from Dave Mottram and Paddy Little seeking revision of the minutes in relation to comments made by PW in item 11 – Groundwater Conditions. The minutes have not been amended as they reflect what was actually said at the meeting, but PW acknowledged that instead of stating ground water in the third line he should have said 'surface water run-off'.
- ii. **Action List Review – BL reviewed the diminishing list of outstanding issues as follows:**

FC/48/19 – Obtain quotes for tree works – SC is actively seeking a quote and recommendations from a local tree surgeon

FC/75/19 – Update Village Green Risk Assessments – this will be presented to the February meeting

FC/90/19 – To confirm training included in winch proposal – MK reported that she had consulted Greenway Training who do not consider training is necessary for this small winch. She recommended removing the condition attached to the budget increase approval at the December meeting, but wait to purchase the winch until tree operations commence in Farmers Field.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
To remove the training confirmation condition from the budget increase approval recorded at Item 5c of the 11 th December meeting.	GD	LC	AGREED unanimously

FC/94/19 – Seek Community Bus clarification on website issues – It was agreed to Close this action as the Community Bus accept that they are responsible for updating the website page via BL.

5. Finance

- a. **Financial Statement and Bank Reconciliation as at 31st December 2019** – BL confirmed that the accounts are in good order, the statements had been distributed to all councillors prior to the meeting. No

questions were raised. GD congratulated the Tennis Club on gaining their funding from Sport England for the new clubhouse, BL asked TH to confirm when the Club will need to draw down the financial assistance agreed by UPC for this purpose.

ACTION: FC/01/20 - TH

b. 2nd Draft 2020/2021 Precept and Budget – BL confirmed that this document had been circulated to all councillors prior to the meeting. BL reiterated the following:

- At this stage the draft budget is only intended to inform the PRECEPT decision.
- The 2nd draft budget currently indicates that the predicted income, including an increase equating to a 2% rise in Parish council tax, falls short of currently proposed expenditure by around £6500.
- PRECEPT decision has to be taken tonight
- **PRECEPT demand is largely dependent on what % local council tax increase can be justified by UPC to the Parish community based on currently proposed expenditure in the 20/21 draft budget.**
- The budget will be subsequently adjusted at the March 2020 meeting to reflect the PRECEPT demanded, updated 19/20 expenditure and any other income expected. Adjustments will largely fall to the project budget as Fixed and Running costs are largely ring fenced.

GD then asked all councillors individually their views on the level of council tax they believed could be justified, all were generally content with a 2% increase recognising that some costs will need to be cut from the budget in due course. In response to a question from DS, PW said that the WC council tax increase is likely to be around 2% + 2% social care element but this would not be confirmed or otherwise until the February Cabinet meeting. Fire and Police Authority increases may be more in percentage terms.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
To set the PRECEPT at £50,812 equating to a 2% increase in Parish Council Tax. Band D will increase by £1.83 to £93.38 per annum.	GD	TH	AGREED Unanimously

ACTION: FC/2/20 - BL

c. Contribution to Redhorn News – Having heard the public representations, GD reiterated that UPC currently contributes £1375 per annum (for a two year period from January 2019) equating to six months of the cost to provide free copies to all households in the Parish. TH commented that he believed that this is a significant contribution which should not be increased. DS confirmed that the Community Bus proposal had been raised at the last Scarecrow Committee meeting and would be further discussed at the next meeting. LC agreed that UPC should not increase the current share contribution.

The Chairman closed the meeting for Public Participation

Mrs Cannon commented that the Parish Council originally agreed to pay for all households to ensure that community information was spread to all parishioners as required by the Quality Council status applying at that time. Mr Scarffe commented that as long as the total costs are covered one way or another, there is no threat to Redhorn News at this stage. Mrs Potter commented that some small organisations within the Parish also contribute, this was confirmed by Mr Scarffe. Mr Donald applauded the fact that Redhorn is 'free' to all households in the Parish, but reiterated his view that Scarecrows should seriously consider taking over the Community Bus contribution.

The Chairman re-opened the Council meeting

GD summed up the discussion by stating that UPC will continue to abide by the 2 year agreement to contribute for 6 months cost. The subject can be re-addressed if necessary after that time.

6. Lead Councillor, Working Groups, Clerk & other Written Reports (See Appendix attached on website only)

a. Clerks Report – BL updated the report in relation to the 'Pedestrian Crossing' signs, he has again hastened WC early action on this issue which has now been outstanding for around 2 years. GD stated that WC

had now agreed to meet to clarify various issues on the Crookwood Lane lay-by project, he will be arranging this meet shortly with the objective of facilitating an early start of works.

b. Councillor Reports

- i. Community Shop Update – Richard Mistlin and David Myers have accepted an invitation to attend the February meeting to make a presentation.
- ii. Urchfont Pond – MB updated his report by stating that Aquatic Consultancy had visited the site on 6th January and that their subsequent report included good and bad news. Whilst there has been a 95% decrease in the level of blue-green algae, the levels are still too high to remove the warning signs around the pond. Water clarity has improved considerably. In response to a question from PC, MB confirmed that blue green algae is actually a bacteria which is not dependent on seasonal variations. Further good news is that planting can now be in planters rather than suspended in coir rolls, this will decrease cost significantly and can be implemented sooner. The biggest problem that remains is the significant population of fish which churn up the silt, he suggested that what to do about this should be an item for the February agenda.

7. Crooks Lane Working Group – GD commented that work has now commenced on the site by QDOS Homes. A request has been made to the QDOS project manager for a meeting with UPC as soon as possible to discuss the project and implementation of Informative 20 in the Planning Consent. It has now been agreed that the current UPC working group (GD, GC and Nicola Sage) will be disbanded forthwith, our thanks go to Nicola for her contribution. GD and GC will continue to retain responsibility for this initiative. Commenting on earlier public participation views, PW confirmed that WC planning approval conditions cannot be applied or monitored outside of the specified development site. PW also confirmed that 25% of CIL monies associated with this development will eventually be paid to UPC.

Chairman closed the meeting for public participation

Ms Hammond stated that during only the first week of activity on this site, verges in the area have been significantly damaged by contractor vehicles. GD commented that UPC is already aware of this / other issues and knows that residents have already raised this with QDOS.

Chairman re-opened the Council meeting.

8. Community Skips – Devizes Mini Skips ceased trading as a mini skip provider on 31st December 2019. BL had suggested the following potential options to councillors prior to the meeting:

Potential Options:

- Discontinue service altogether
- Select new contractor at potentially significant increase in cost
- Utilise Kevin Summers planned new 'Man with a van service' to replace mini skip service

TH expressed the view that, on the basis that household re-cycling and kerbside waste collections now provided alternative means of disposal, that the community skip service should be discontinued. LC tended to agree, especially if people in the community are informed of alternative ways to dispose of unwanted items e.g. through WC and/or local disposal firms. MK believed that the service should be discontinued but was concerned about the skips promised for the Rights of Way (ROW) operations around the Scarecrow event and disposal facilities in the cemetery. MB suggested that an area could be marked out in the cemetery for the disposal of green waste and then one of the UPC contractors could be tasked with clearance when necessary.

Chairman closed the meeting for public participation

Mrs Potter commented that the community skips are often used by people from outside of the Parish, why should they gain this benefit. She was, however, concerned that discontinuation of the service might lead to more fly-tipping.

Chairman re-opened the Council meeting

Proposal	Proposer	Seconded	Resolution
To discontinue the provision of community skips forthwith.	GD	SC	AGREED unanimously

It was agreed that BL should include this decision in the next edition of Redhorn News and on the website together with guidance on other organisations that can provide waste disposal services.

ACTION: FC/03/20 - BL

9. UPC Highways Review – MB and MH had completed a survey of highways issues within the Parish, their report listing around 61 issues/locations had been circulated to all councillors prior to the meeting. MH reported that they now intended to meet with WC Highways to highlight all these issues and hopefully gain improvements. PW recommended that all the issues should initially be logged on the 'My Wiltshire' App to try and resolve most without the need for a meeting, those remaining could then benefit from a meeting with WC Highways. He also suggested that when the lay-by project team meet with Malcolm Beaven shortly, he could be shown / given a copy of the survey report. Having read the report, MK commented that many of the issues could benefit from self-help by members of the community, for example by trying to clear blocked drains. Experience of such activity in the Stonepit lay-by last year was most beneficial.

10. Bus Shelter / Seat by Crooks Lane – The proposal from Paul Bancroft had been circulated to all councillors prior to the meeting, he was of the view that this would benefit all waiting for a bus near Crooks Lane. LC commented that this is a nice to have facility, but cost could be an issue. TH commented that this could apply to the bus stop opposite The Paddock where a lot of children wait for school buses. PC believed that some bus company's provide shelters free in exchange for advertising space in them. GD stated that this proposal should be added to the list of potential projects for future consideration dependent on funds availability and priorities.

ACTION: FC/04/20 - BL

11. Annual Parish Meeting – The date for the next Annual Parish meeting has now been confirmed as 29th May 2020. GD emphasised that the challenge is to try and encourage more people to attend and exchange ideas, with that in mind he outlined a few ideas as follows:

- Wine and Nibbles to start
- Usual presentations by UPC on past year achievements including updates on Urchfont Pond & Farmers Field
- Presentation on 'Green Issues'
- Give local clubs and organisations the opportunity to have a stand to promote their activities before and after the actual meeting e.g tennis and cricket clubs, community bus, scouts, schools
- PW volunteered to be the guest speaker

GD asked for any other ideas to be sent to him and/or BL.

ACTION: FC/05/20 - ALL

12. "Green" issues – GD reported that he had received a letter from Ann Blunden believing she is expressing the views of many people about the need for the community to do more to help the environment including tree planting and other activities to help insects and bees when climate change is having a significant impact. GD has invited her to attend the February meeting to discuss this further. GD reminded councillors of the UPC 10-Year Strategy which includes some reference to "green" issues and SC pointed out that the last tree survey included proposals to replace trees specifically in the Paddock. MB referred to the Highways survey and in particular the erosion of verges and green spaces, Top Green in particular has significantly reduced in size. LC commented that this is a very worthy issue, but we need to address the reasons for the erosion, namely increasing traffic through the Parish. LC cited the fact that 40% of children at Urchfont School are from out of Urchfont and delivery vans increase as on-line shopping takes hold. He suggested that there is a need to look at a solution holistically.

Chairman closed the meeting for public participation

Mrs Potter commented that more people have more than one car these days, many are parked on the highway rather than on their own property even if they have room. This potentially causes difficulty for larger vehicles who have to mount verges to pass.

Chairman re-opened the Council meeting

13. Update on Current Parish Issues not covered by above agenda items – Nothing to report

14. External Meetings – None to report

15. Councillors' Reports and Items for Future Agenda –

- i. **Accidents on the A342** – GD reported that BL had received an email from Mrs Nash of the Bell Caravan Park expressing concerns about recent significant accidents on the A342 which have put her property and others in danger. She is seeking improvements to this road to help make it safer. She also wrote to PW who has subsequently responded (all emails have been copied to councillors prior to the meeting). PW suggests that there is little to be done to improve the situation on a relatively straight road within a 50mph speed limit, he contends that the problem is more with drivers who are driving too fast and lose control. Installation of additional crossing islands for pedestrians may in fact increase the danger and are not considered appropriate.

PC expressed significant annoyance with this view, in particular in relation to the design of the junction at Lydeaway which has been the scene of various accidents. Whilst the design might have been to control the speed of traffic turning at the junction, in reality it has created difficulties for large vehicles which regularly cross the junction on the wrong side of the island and/or take up a lot of road when going towards Planks Farm. A small mini roundabout would help to overcome speeding and the junction access issues. PW stated that UPC can submit a proposal to have the junction changed, he is not aware that this has formally been submitted in the past.

PC added that additional yellow direction signs have been added to Lydeaway Junction signs which further obscure visibility. BL commented that these may be Uphill contractors signage, a number have appeared around Urchfont.

- ii. **Japanese Knotweed in Old School Lane** – MK reported that she been advised that this weed is in the verge in this Lane, although it is not clearly visible at this time of year. PW commented that this is a notifiable issue and should be reported via the My Wiltshire App.

ACTION: FC/06/20 - MK

- iii. **January Devizes Area Board Meeting** - LK will attend the forthcoming meeting on 13th January.

iv. **Items for the next agenda:**

- Presentation by the Community Shop
- Fish in Urchfont Pond
- Green Issues
- Village Green Risk Assessments

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.03pm

Date of Next Meeting: 12th February 2020 in Urchfont Village Hall Conference Room commencing at 7.00pm

a. CLERK'S REPORT

1. Update on Clerk's actions from December Meeting

FC/93/19 – Review of UPC 'Planning for an Emergency' policy / procedure – ongoing with GD

2. Finance – Financial Summary and Bank Reconciliation is distributed to Councillors with this agenda. Accounts are in good order, but still with negative Reserve indicated at the end of March 2020 due to the fact that CIL monies (£19,716) have not yet been transferred in respect of the lay-by project. When this transfer occurs there will be a significant amount of project money available for use within this financial year if new projects can be appropriately identified and approved. I will distribute an updated second draft 2020/21 Budget and Precept requirement prior to the meeting. As explained at the December meeting the level of Precept will be dependent on proposed funding requirements in 2020/21 but tempered by the level of local tax percentage increase which Council believe can be justified to the Parish community. The level of Precept must be decided at the January meeting to meet WC deadlines.

3. Crookwood Lay-By Contract – Although a start date had been agreed of on or about 25th November 2019, which was notified on the website and in Redhorn News, this had to be postponed due to the fact that further clarification is necessary on lay-by surface materials, dimensions and connection to the highway requirements from WC Highways. The contractor and UPC Project Manager (Graham Day) are hoping to meet with WC early in the New Year.

4. Pedestrian Crossing Signs – Despite further assurances from WC Highways, the promised 'pedestrians crossing' signs either side of the informal B3098 crossing by Crooks Lane have still not materialised.

5. Tennis Club Lease – The UPC solicitor has confirmed that, following consent from Wiltshire Council to the lease required by the CAT Agreement, the copies of the signed leases have now been dated and are complete. He will now register the lease with the Land registry. The lease is for a 50 year period commencing on 1st December 2019. Partly as a result of this lease, Sport England has now confirmed the award to the Tennis Club of £17k towards their new clubhouse.

6. Duck House and Pond Green Water Supply – I understand from Cllr Stevens that he is still progressing quotes for the extended supply to Pond Green, but that he and a qualified plumber will be installing the Duck House tap and water pipes over the weekend 4/5 January to facilitate connection to the mains by Wessex Water prior to their deadline for the current connection quote on 12th January 2020.

7. Village Green Risk Assessments – Due mainly to the Christmas / New Year holiday period, it has not been possible to complete the update of the assessments for presentation at the January meeting. The Chairman has agreed that this should be delayed to the February meeting.

Bob Lunn, Clerk to the Council

b. Councillor Reports

i. Community Shop – an update to the written report made to and discussion at the December meeting

I have now had the opportunity of having an extensive chat with Richard Mistlin (Chairman, Urchfont Community Shop) and David Myers (Treasurer). They have provided the following updates/corrections to my last report:

- 1) the shop at Seend (which is not a Community Shop) is still trading. They were both aware of the closure of the Rowde shop (if only because they were offered the opportunity of purchasing surplus stock) and are disappointed at its closure since Richard had provided advice when it started up. They are however confident that the factors behind its closure have no impact here in Urchfont;
- 2) Urchfont Community Shop is trading well;
- 3) Whilst Urchfont Community Shop and the Post Office are co-located, they are separate businesses and the shop could continue trading on its own.

I am happy to report that they have both accepted an invitation from the Chairman to attend our February meeting at which they will report more information about the current status of the shop. However, they will not be able to divulge detailed financial reports in advance of auditing and their own AGM.

Cllr Martyn Hollyman

ii. Urchfont Pond

No treatments have been added to the pond in December.

Bernice Brewster will be visiting Urchfont on Monday 6th January to test the pond water and conduct a Site survey of the overall condition of the pond prior to making recommendations for the planting of British aquatic plant species

It is hoped to have the results of her survey In time for the January UPC meeting

Cllr Mark Botham