



DRAFT Minutes of the Urchfont Parish Council (UPC) Virtual Full Council Meeting held remotely on Wednesday 8th April 2020.

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

Clerk to the Council: Lunn (BL)

Councillor for Urchfont & The Cannings: Whitehead (PW)

Members of the Public (for all or part of the meeting): As a consequence of the Coronavirus lockdown requirements, this meeting was held remotely using conference software. Members of the public were not on this occasion able to participate, however, they were given the opportunity via the agenda to submit comments by email to the Clerk prior to the meeting.

A. Introduction

1. Welcome by the Chairman – the Chairman welcomed councillors to the first remote meeting of the Council. He took the opportunity to thank the collective response of the Council and community volunteers to provide a high level of ongoing community support to many people in the Parish during the unprecedented Coronavirus lockdown scenario.

2. Apologies: All councillors present

3. Updated UPC Planning Policy and Procedure – TH explained the update primarily reflected the change procedures following transfer of planning responsibilities to the Clerk when Sandra left the Planning Administrator role, tightened the reporting requirements associated with pre and mid planning meetings and clarified the calling-in criteria.

| Proposal | Proposer | Seconder | Resolution |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| To approve the updated UPC Planning Policy and Procedure unchanged. | GD | PC | AGREED Unanimously |

B. PLANNING – See separate minutes.

C. FULL COUNCIL MEETING

1. Declarations of Interest – None declared

2. Email input from members of the public and External Reports – BL reported that submissions had been received from Mr & Mrs Everett, Mr & Mrs Kerr and Cllr Whitehead, all of which will be considered under Item 6v.

3. Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 11th March 2020

| Proposal | Proposer | Seconder | Resolution |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|---|
| To approve the minutes unchanged as a true and accurate record of the meeting on 11th March. (Note: the minutes will be signed by the Chairman in due course) | SC | LK | AGREED – 6 in favour, 4 abstentions due to absence from last meeting |

4. Action List Status Review and Update Reports from the Minutes of the meeting held on 11th March 2020 – BL reported that no actions were outstanding, all are currently in progress.

a. Update on Urchfont Community Shop – GD updated his comments made at the February meeting suggesting that lessons could be learned from a relatively new shop in Broughton. He has been advised that the shops are not comparable in that the one in Broughton is much larger, sells wines and spirits, has a coffee shop and unlike Urchfont, that the post office is part of the business instead of separate. GD also read out extracts from the following update from the shop:

"Coronavirus: Responding to the current situation, many villagers are having to stay at home or collect supplies from outside the Shop. In response to this, we have implemented a system whereby those with a regular newspaper order can prepay for a week or more (by voucher or cash) and have their paper either left undercover by our noticeboards, or delivered. We are very grateful to Harvey Creasey-Cottle, who has become our 'newspaper boy'.

Additionally, customers can place an order for groceries etc. by phone and have it delivered, or can collect from outside. Orders can be placed Monday - Saturday inclusive. We have set-up a facility to take payment by card over the phone, or for the deliverer to collect cash.

The pub very kindly offered to be the phone contact for orders between 9 and 11 am Monday - Saturday and this has relieved pressure on the managers and volunteers.

As from 6th April, the Shop will be closed between 1 and 2 pm, to allow for the making-up of orders, so they can be delivered/collected the same afternoon. Orders received up to midday will be available the same day.

Many of our volunteers - well over half - are unable to assist at the moment. So far we have managed to find enough, thanks to many new offers of help from around the Village.

Our aim is to continue to keep the Shop open and as well-stocked as we can, for the benefit of the whole community."

b. Tree Survey - BL confirmed that he had heard from Jonathan Astill that he had completed the visual survey of trees and is now completing his report which will be completed by the end of April. DS commented that he had seen Jonathan carrying out his inspection and understood that he would be prepared to attend a future council meeting if required to give a better understanding of tree issues and also planting criteria.

5. Finance

a. Financial Statement and Bank Reconciliation as at 31st March 2020 – BL confirmed that the financial statement and bank reconciliation / spend record for the end of the financial year (31st March) had been circulated to councillors prior to the meeting. Accounts are in good order as reported in his written report (Appendix 1 on website). BL is now preparing for the financial and governance internal and external audits, some reporting dates are now being relaxed due to the COVID-19 situation and he is awaiting confirmation on this.

b. Proposed budget of £250 for Coronavirus Expenses - BL explained that he needed budget approval to facilitate miscellaneous appropriate payments arising as a result of the COVID-19 situation including Zoom costs and the Community Support Group requirements for gloves etc.

| Proposal | Proposer | Seconder | Resolution |
|---|----------|----------|--------------------|
| To approve a Coronavirus budget of £250 to be administered by BL. | GD | GC | AGREED Unanimously |

6. Lead Councillor, Working Groups, Clerk & other Written Reports (See Appendix 1 attached on website only)

a. Clerks Report – no update provided or clarification requested.

b. Councillor Reports – BL reminded councillors that written reports do not need to be discussed unless there is an update or clarification is requested.

i. **Environment Working Group** – GD commented that tree planting is an interesting concept, Anne Blunden had already sent in some ideas on this. MK commented that trees are being felled in Farmers Field and on Salisbury Plain because of Ash Die Back, evidence that trees in close proximity can be an issue over time. LC agreed that small forest concepts are not a good idea, but planting in verges of farmers land and on the margins of Salisbury Plain are worth considering. TH agreed, but not with planting in built up areas or near facilities. PW commented that hedgerow planting is more beneficial and easier to manage, especially along highway verges. LC stated that Peter Newell had now joined the WG.

ii. **Farmers Field Update** - no update provided or clarification requested.

iii. **Urchfont Pond Update** - no update provided or clarification requested.

iv. **UPC Highways** - no update provided or clarification requested.

v. **Crookwood Lane Lay-By** – BL reported that the following submissions had been received on this topic and distributed to all councillors prior to the meeting:

Alistair & Sam Everett – a long and detailed statement which in summary - congratulates UPC on *'the professional and precise manner in which the project had been conducted with care and attention to detail'* but in conclusion asks the council *'to adopt a strategy of low visual impact instead of high impact for this project'* particularly in relation to the red pavements being laid and *'to urgently take advice from a WC senior planning official and the conservation officer'* to ensure that the project is compatible with a village environment.

Shula & Brian Kerr – In summary, no overall problem with the project, but *"the single issue they have is the red colour of the paving selected for this area, which we strongly believe is not in keeping with the rural nature of this part of the village"*.

Philip Whitehead – giving reasons for and registering his *"earlier request for the entrance at the end of the path (to Oakfrith Wood where it joins the School driveway) to be closed and the single main entrance with pedestrian and vehicle access to be used"*.

See also updated written report at Appendix 1.

GD explained that he had been having what he believed a personal interaction with Mr Everett by email and verbally for a few days on perceived lay-by concerns, this position changed to involve UPC on 6th April when Mr Everett (at GD's invitation) asked BL to provide him with visual elements of the layout (e.g. site plan(s), any visual mock up, details of additional markings on the ground, landscaping, signage etc.?). BL responded on 6th April 2020 with a detailed and factual account of the initial plans provided by WC in April 2018, selection of contractor and updating of requirements in consultation with WC Highways at the end of January 2020. Mr Everett then submitted his statement to Council members on 8th April including copies of the personal emails between him and GD, a situation which GD is particularly not happy about because at least one of the emails contained personal family information. It was suggested by PW that GD needs to contact Mr Everett on this issue and ask him not to circulate personal information further.

ACTION: FC/21/20 – GD

The fundamental concern expressed by Mr Everett and Mr & Mrs Kerr is the perceived inappropriate use of Brett Brindle paving blocks which are pink / red in colour in the village environment. MH had viewed the site, he believed that the current block paving colour is appropriate and as such his preference is to continue. MH added that several local properties have block paving of a similar colour which has weathered. LC was astonished that people are objecting to the colour of the blocks, he has viewed and considers them to be basically brick coloured and acceptable. Numerous members of the public have also expressed satisfaction with the paving colour and the project as a whole.

PW expressed the view that he believed that the real issue is the complete surprise of coloured block paving being laid when the complainants expected Ecogrid matting from previous publicity. Although all changes to the project had been discussed, voted upon and minuted, if UPC undertakes a future project of this nature then it needs to be fully "socialised" with all concerned, and particularly those living close to the project. PW exemplified perennial problems which WC have regardless of how much publicity they give to some of their projects. Whilst PW was aware of the change to block paving, he was expecting a grey based colour not the Brett Brindle. Obviously the finished lay-by will be a much better outlook than the muddy patch which previously existed, but people need time to come to terms with change.

SC suggested that planting of the bank is a key factor to mitigate the current appearance and view from Cuckoo Farmhouse in particular. LK advised that she had contacts with a not for profit local organisation specialising in supply and advice on wild flower planting, she could ask them to come and advise what would be the best mix. GD agreed and tasked LK to try to facilitate provision of such advice. PW warned that the soil may be too rich and fertile for wild flowers. PW also suggested that maybe Mr & Mrs Everett could be consulted on the planting scheme to involve them in the project moving forward, this was agreed as being the right course of action and BL should advise them of this.

ACTION: FC/22/20 – LK
ACTION: FC/23/20 - BL

GD questioned why PW had suggested closing the end of the Oakfrith pathway, this is not part of the lay-by project. To his knowledge no one else had suggested closure of this entrance, indeed he regularly sees many people accessing the path by this route. TH agreed in that it is the natural and most direct pedestrian route from Cuckoo Corner for anyone going to the Wood or Recreation Ground, he would not support closure of the path entrance. GD, LK, MH and SC agreed. LK stated that this is the entrance used by children going to the School, GC countered that from the point of view of the School the path should be closed off as children should not walk down the driveway. A pedestrian gate exists in the pathway fence to facilitate access to the School via the playing field. BL confirmed that the entrance was in place as now when the pathway was subject of CAT transfer from WC to UPC. PW suggested that this is an ideal opportunity for UPC to close this entrance and promote use of the main metal swing gate and vehicle gate which are both far more visible now. Apart from the potential for people slipping on the end of path existing entrance often muddy slopes, it has been seen to be used by motorbikes to enter the playing field and pathway. GD recognised that the existing slope(s) at the end of the path are not ideal, that is why Geoff Potter has offered to install a 'bell mouth' road stone path bounded by timber to improve the slope surface (see updated written report at Appendix 1).

At the conclusion of the discussion, the following two proposals were made:

| Proposal | Proposer | Seconded | Resolution |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|--|
| Not to fence off the end of the Oakfrith Pathway where it joins the School driveway and to accept Geoff Potter's gift to improve the entrance bank. | TH | GD | AGREED – 6 in favour, 3 against, 1 abstention |

| Proposal | Proposer | Seconded | Resolution |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| To authorise the works to continue forthwith using the Brett Brindle paving blocks, rake the bank and seek expert advice on bank planting (e.g. wild flower / grass mix), no parking lane markings to be used and no additional signage to be deployed in relation to the lay-by. GD to advise contractor. | GD | MB | AGREED Unanimously |

ACTION: FC/24/20 – GD

vi. Coronavirus Community Volunteer Support – GD thanked LK for the comprehensive report and the efforts of all those involved in the support group. LC expressed thanks to all the volunteers involved, a true demonstration of Urchfont Community Spirit. LK said that Andrew Jack (Devizes Community Engagement Manager) had used Urchfont as a good example of volunteer activity in the County.

7. UPC Response to Coronavirus (COVID-19) – BL stated that since the agenda was published more clarity had been gained on updated legislation (the 2020 Regulations) and guidance from NALC (National Association of Local Councils) which better informs on meeting practicalities, effects on normal reporting deadlines etc. As such there is no need to discuss further at this point.

8. Annual Parish Meeting (29th May 2020) – Following publication of the 2020 Regulations, NALC legal advice is that meetings such as this should not be held in person and that they are not included in those meetings

allowed to be conducted remotely. As such it was agreed that the meeting scheduled to be held on 29th May 2020 should be cancelled forthwith.

ACTION: FC/25/20 – BL

9. Update on Current Parish Issues not covered by above agenda items – BL reported that he has had to submit a report showing availability of vacant plots Urchfont Cemetery to WC as part of the Coronavirus Emergency Plan. He has advised that there are potentially 55 plots available in consecrated ground, 40 plots in unconsecrated ground and 17 cremation plots available as at 2nd April. The report has to be updated every Tuesday and Thursday each week so that reports can be made to central government.

10. External Meetings – None attended. PW confirmed that almost all WC public meetings have been cancelled to ensure maintenance of democratic decision making during these difficult times.

11. Councillors' Other Reports and Items for Future Agenda – PC reported that all published journeys of the Urchfont Community bus have been cancelled until further notice. A visit to Salisbury to assist in the delivery of food parcels to vulnerable people earlier this week was cancelled, but the bus had already had some seats removed to facilitate additional cargo space and may be called on for this purpose in the future. The possibility of using the bus to restock the Community Shop by visiting a warehouse should be investigated, PC to speak to the Bus Committee.

ACTION: FC/26/20 – PC

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 8.56pm.

Date of Next Scheduled Meeting if permitted: 13th May 2020 (Annual Council Meeting).

a. CLERK'S REPORT

1. Update on Clerk's actions from February Meeting

FC/13/20 – Instruct Astill Ltd to carry out the tree survey – emailed on 12th March and acknowledgement received on 13th March. Report expected by the end of April 2020.

FC/16/20 – To check the approved Environmental Policy for any conflicts with procurement policy – no conflicts identified, approved Policy published on the website.

2. Finance – Financial Summary and Bank Reconciliation as at 31st March 2020 is distributed to all Councillors with this agenda. Accounts are in good order. The end of financial year reserve is confirmed as positive £8,521 plus £21,489 carried forward from approved project budgets not yet completed plus £6658 CIL account balance = £36,668 plus £1171 Allotment Association managed funds = Overall UPC Bank Balance of £37,839.

3. Internal and External audits – following the end of the financial year on 31st March 2020, I will commence preparation of the accounts and supplementary information / variance explanations for the annual financial and governance audits.

4. Coronavirus (COV-19) – Links have been added to the Parish Council and Community website 'Home' page 'Current Headlines':

- the latest information and advice available on this virus from the UK Government which is updated daily
- the UPC 'Connecting a Caring Community' latest flyer and
- the Wiltshire Council website page.

5. Recreation Facilities Closed – In accordance with Government COVID-19 direction, CLOSURE notices have been posted at the unfenced children's playground in Urchfont Recreation Ground and the area taped off until further notice. The Tennis Courts have similarly been CLOSED until further notice.

6. Urchfont Scarecrow Festival and CPRE Best Kept Village Competition 2020 – both **CANCELLED**.

7. Grounds Maintenance & Litter Bins Contract – In view of the fact that further Government restrictions may be placed on contractor activities because of COVID-19, I have advised the UPC contractor that if he is restricted then litter bin emptying should be classed as a key community health and safety task ahead of other grounds maintenance activities, and the key task completed in accordance with his contract.

8. Wiltshire Council Open Space Survey – due to the current challenging times, the Council have now extended the deadline for completion of household and parish council surveys to the 1st May 2020. The survey can be reached via the Parish Council and Community website home page under 'current headlines'.

Bob Lunn, Clerk to the Council

b. Councillor Reports

i. URCHFONT PARISH ENVIRONMENT WORKING GROUP

The Urchfont Parish Environment Working Group, now known as UPEG, held its first meeting, a virtual one, on Tuesday March 24. It comprises parish councillors Lisa Kinnaird and Lewis Cowen and residents Katharine Wale and Richard Bromley.

It was decided that a complement of five members would be ideal to begin with, with the possibility of co-opting others for their specific expertise when the need arises. We are approaching residents who have expressed their willingness to be involved to find out if any of them are prepared to become the fifth member of the group.

Of several initiatives discussed, the most prominent was tree and hedge planting as a method of carbon capture to work towards addressing the climate emergency. We are in the process of assembling a list of locations in the parish where trees and hedges could be planted. Any suggestions from councillors would be welcome.

Although it is too late this year to begin planting, it is hoped that arrangements can be in place to start planting in autumn/winter 2020.

The parish council will be kept updated on the work of the working group.

Cllrs Lewis Cowen and Lisa Kinnaird

ii. FARMERS FIELD REPORT

The final felling session of the season took place on Saturday March 21, observing all the safety procedures in connection with both felling and social distancing. Around 80 trees have been felled since the operation began and operations will commence again in the autumn.

The hire of a chipper has been cancelled, though, as a result of the coronavirus outbreak and no date has been set for the operation to reduce the "brush" to manageable size.

Maria and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Friends of Farmers Field for their unstinting efforts to manage the woodland.

The next big operation will be replanting, which again is not likely to commence until the autumn.

Cllrs Lewis Cowen and Maria Kemp

iii. URCHFONT POND UPDATE

- Urchfont pond is being registered as a fishery – required to enable the fish to be moved under license.
- A new home has been found for the fish at Crookwood Lake owned by the Devizes Angling Association.
- Aquatic Management Services, the electro fishing contractor is still operating within the lockdown guidelines.
- The fish will be removed in late April / early May.
- Cllrs Botham and Stevens applied 250Kg of Siltex to the pond on 25/03/20.
- A further application of good bacteria and enzymes will be applied on 04/04/20.
- Dye is being applied to the pond on a weekly basis to deter the development of blue/green algae now that the sun has reappeared. More dye has been ordered.
- The planting of the pond is on hold until such time that the specialist large scale water plant nurseries are prepared to receive visitors. Planting such large plants cannot be done whilst maintaining social distancing requirements.
- An interim water sample was sent to Bernice Brewster on 31/03/20. The results show further improvement in overall water quality. Two components remain outside of acceptable parameters. The Blue Green algae count is still just over the threshold of 20,000 cells per mil of water and the ammonia concentration is very high. The removal of the fish will resolve the high ammonia concentrations. The blue green algae species has changed to a species that sits on the water surface. Cllr Botham is liaising with Bernice Brewster and Aquatic Management Services to see if Barley Straw Extract can be used to significantly reduce the algae.

Cllr Mark Botham

iv. UPC HIGHWAYS AND VERGES REPORT

- All the blocked drains / gullies in the village have been unblocked and cleared out.
- The most serious potholes in the village roads have been filled in. The support of Val Brockie has certainly paid dividends in getting the Uphill section of Friars Lane repaired.
- Cllr Hollyman has been advised by Richard Dobson that an S96 license should be raised in respect of a plan to protect the finger of land at the entrance to Manor Farmyard. Cllrs Hollyman and Botham to action.
- Investigation of the uses of S 96 and S 142 licenses relating to verge repairs is still in progress.
- Cllrs Hollyman and Botham have planned for the next full review of the village's highways and verges in June. Richard Dobson will be invited to accompany them – social distancing requirements will be applied if still required.

Cllrs Mark Botham and Martyn Hollyman

v. CROOKWOOD LANE LAY-BY

Work has continued and progressed well, despite delays to delivery of materials caused by the coronavirus situation. The carriageway tarmac strip and all substrata on the carpark area have been laid and work has just commenced on laying the paving blocks. These photographs were taken on Tuesday afternoon.



At time of writing, a small area of the ground has been laid with Brett Brindle 60mm paving blocks, and we are assessing the impact of these.

The old fence has been removed and replaced. The bank will need further raking and then we will need to decide how to protect it and the currently bare surface at the top. Current thinking is that we may introduce a mix of grass and wild flowers to the bank to provide colour and stability, and simply lay grass on the horizontal surface for ease of future maintenance. Use of wild flowers at this location could be a complement to the verge protection work being pursued by the Highways team.

Cllr Graham Day

Updated Crookwood Lane Lay-By Report issued on 7th April 2020

Following an enquiry from a local resident, reconfirmation was requested and obtained from Wiltshire Council late last week that: the project has the full support of WC; all materials being used in the construction of the lay-by are acceptable to WC; and that Highways reserves the right to inspect the final outcome.

A discussion between Councillors Day and Hill and Geoff Potter was held on Monday afternoon to consider the final details of the project:

- 1) Surface markings – it was decided that once all the paving blocks have been laid, there will be no additional markings to the surface. It is hoped that common sense, possibly supplemented by guidance comments in the Redhorn News, will ensure that this facility is used sensibly;
- 2) Signage – we have received no indication from Wiltshire Highways about any new signage for the lay-by, so Geoff will reinstate the UPC notice on the fence and the road traffic sign;
- 3) As previously mentioned, it is intended to rake the bank and sow a wild flower/grass mix to provide support and visual attraction. The top of the bank will be grassed to facilitate maintenance.

As a gift to the community, Geoff Potter has offered to improve the step up from the entrance at the school drive to the path to Oakfrith Wood. At present, user footfall has created two routes up the small incline, and both can be slippery in wet weather. Geoff is proposing to provide a "bell mouth" of approximately 3.5 metres length and 2 metres width laid nearest to the recreation ground fence to minimise gradient and ease accessibility to the existing path. It will be composed of Type 1 road stone and bounded by timber to retain the material inside the configuration of the path.

View looking west

View looking east



UPC support for the lay-by proposals and grateful acceptance of Geoff's offer are requested at the meeting on 8th April 2020. If accepted, the project will be completed on time and on budget.

Cllr Graham Day

vi. CORONAVIRUS COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

As this is a fairly large and comprehensive report it can be reached via a [LINK](#) on the MINUTES page.

Cllr Lisa Kinnaird