

DRAFT Minutes of the Urchfont Parish Council (UPC) Full Council Meeting held on Wednesday 12th June 2019 in the Village Hall.

Present: Councillors: Day (GD – Chairman), Hill (TH – Lead of Planning), Creasey (GC), Cottle (SC), Kemp (MK), Stevens (DS), Cottell (PC), Kinnaird (LK) and Botham (MB)

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 M Smith, Mrs C Cannon, Ms N Hammond, Mrs E Bancroft, Mr R Hawkins

A. Introduction

1. **Welcome by the Chairman** – GD welcomed all to the meeting. He then recorded thanks and best wishes for the future to Ros and Robert Pendry on behalf of the Council for their long involvement with and leadership of the Scarecrow Festival. Robert is now standing down as Chairman.

2. **Apologies** – Cllr Cowen (LC)

3. **Election of Vice Chairman** – GD commented that he had consulted with councillors prior to the meeting without any success in identifying candidates willing to stand for this post. Consequently there were no nominations at the meeting. The item will be carried forward to the July meeting.

B. PLANNING – see separate agenda

C. FULL COUNCIL MEETING

1. **Declarations of Interest** – None were declared at the meeting

2. **Time set aside for Public Participation and External Reports** – Mr Hawkins thanked UPC for the time and effort they have put into the PROW collection of evidence, investigation with WC and the Public Enquiry process. He was extremely surprised and disappointed at the Enquiry decision, the whole Community has lost a much needed access facility now and for the future. He could say a lot more but chose not too apart from emphasising that all the evidence was provided by residents who spoke the truth and expressed genuine concerns.

3. Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 8th May 2019

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
To approve and sign the minutes unchanged as a true and accurate record of the meeting	TH	MK	AGREED - 2 abstentions due to absence

4. Action List Status Review and Update Reports from the Minutes of the meeting held on 8th May 2019 not covered as separate agenda items below.

i. BL was pleased to report that outstanding actions are reducing and that none fell into the red category. Those that remain are all genuinely in progress.

ii. GD reported that a joint email had been received from Messrs Mottram/Holt/Donald on 11th June 2019 raising concerns about comments made at Item C6bi in the minutes of the meeting on 8th May 2019 regarding the level of affordable housing. This email had been distributed to all councillors prior to the meeting, GD asked whether any councillor wished to make comment, no comments were made.

5. Finance

a. Financial Statement and Bank Reconciliation as at 31st May 2019 – Statements had been distributed to councillors prior to the meeting, BL summarised the comments he had made in his Clerk's report, no questions were posed by councillors.

b. Clerk Appraisal and Salary Recommendation wef 1st April 2019 – GD reported that in the absence of a Vice Chairman he had solely undertaken the appraisal against a defined set of performance criteria which he had then offered to councillors to view. It has been an incredibly stressful and busy year for BL dealing with a multitude of issues not always known to councillors and also taking on the planning administrator role from October. All this he has taken on maintaining a high degree of integrity, independence and performance. As a result GD recommended that BL be awarded the NALC increase at his current spine point 24 plus a merit increase to spine point 25 which overall amounts to an hourly increase of 6%. NALC have now introduced a new scale point range which means that spine point 25 is now spine point 17 allied to revised Local Council profile descriptions which in part puts UPC in a higher profile than the clerk's current pay range, but BL has indicated that he is content with this award and more importantly wants to continue in the role.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
To approve the proposed increase from NALC old Scale Point 24 to Scale Point 25 backdated to the 1st April 2019	GD	DS	Unanimously AGREED

c. Proposed Increase in Cemetery Fees – The proposal had been distributed to all councillors prior to the meeting. BL explained that whilst two of the three comparison sites had not increased their fees since the last UPC review in 2017, Urchfont Cemetery fees still remained well below the comparison sites. However, to achieve parity would require a significant increase, as such BL proposed a 5% increase from 1st July 2019. Whilst not normally endorsing other than minimal increases, TH commented on how far out of line Urchfont is compared to other cemeteries.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
To approve the proposed increase of 5% in fees with effect 1 st July 2019.	TH	GC	Unanimously AGREED

d. Project Proposals

i. Farmers Field Budget proposals – MK presented the proposals, which had been distributed to all councillors prior to the meeting, highlighting options which could reduce the budget requirement. She emphasised that this is in contrast to the commercial quote obtained for the first tranche of tree work which was £2800, but further such costs would be involved in the future. BL emphasised the need to consider and answer the option questions posed against individual budget proposals, he also identified that the quoted cost for a first aid Kit is understated as specific kit is required. During detailed discussion and debate to which all councillors contributed, the following consensus emerged:

- a. Training and use of FoFF volunteers was preferred to use of contractors, except where tree works are outside the scope of the training provided e.g. working at height
- b. UPC to pay full cost of training
- c. UPC to provide full PPE to both volunteers
- d. UPC to cover the cost of service maintenance by manufacturer's approved agents of chainsaw equipment owned by volunteers and used in FF
- e. First-aid training to be provided (linked with volunteers in Oakfrith Wood - GC commented that Oakfrith have an annual training session using a qualified paramedic, it may be possible for FoFF volunteers to take part)
- f. After further debate, it was agreed that a councillor need not be present when work is undertaken, but all work should be carried out under RAMS (Risk Assessment and Methodology Statement) approved by UPC.

GD asked whether all work in Oakfrith Wood is carried out by volunteers, GC confirmed that this is the case with the exception of working at height which is undertaken by commercial contractors. On the subject of the Turfor winch, it was generally felt that this could be deferred at this point in favour of current practices employed by FOFF volunteers.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
<p>A. To approve the training of volunteers in chain saw use, UPC to pay the full cost of training, UPC to purchase new PPE for both volunteers and volunteers to use their own chain saw equipment</p> <p>B. To approve the following budget:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full Chain Saw training costs - £1700 • Two full sets of PPE - £760 • Appropriate First Aid Kit – Cost to be confirmed <p>Note: Maintenance / Servicing costs are already covered by the Farmers Field Running Cost Budget.</p>	GD	DS	AGREED with one abstention

ii. **Terms and Conditions for Chain Saw use in Farmers Field** – BL had distributed a draft to all councillors prior to the meeting. He explained that he felt this documentation is now necessary to ensure that all concerned with Farmers Field are fully aware of and comply with the terms and conditions necessary to satisfy insurance and regulatory authority requirements at all times (including RIDDOR). Whilst specifically relating to use of chain saws, these T&C's should generally apply to all activities in the Field. Without such compliance UPC and individuals could be vulnerable to rejection of any claims made and maybe prosecution. MK suggested that UPC probably needs to ensure that one of the councillors is on site when chain saw works are undertaken, TH thought that his is going over the top. SC suggested that an additional requirement for method statements should be included in the T&C's and PC identified that no lone working should also be specified. GC commented that Oakfrith Wood use generic risk assessments which he believed could be made available to Farmers Field. It was agreed that BL should update, refine and redistribute the draft for approval at the July meeting.

ACTION: FC/46/19 - BL

iii. **Crookwood Lane Lay-By** – BL reported that he had now received three contractor quotes (two updated from last October and one new) against the specification provided by WC, one other contractor has not yet responded. However, BL was not prepared to divulge the quotes at this stage because one contractor had provided a quote based on a more robust surface. BL will now ask the other two contractors if they want to update their quotes based on the more robust surface specification with the view to presenting quotes at the July meeting for approval.

ACTION: FC/47/19 - BL

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

a. **Clerks Report** – BL added to his report that he and DS will shortly be carrying out further investigation of the Cemetery Gate to establish exactly what work needs to be undertaken as soon as possible to rectify the sticking gate, an update report will be given at the July meeting.

b. **Councillor Reports - Urchfont Trees Condition Survey** – Supplementing his written report, SC stated that it is now two years since the survey report was received and although some advised works have been completed others have not. A new survey could be commissioned to update the scenario but perhaps this would be better completed when identified works have been completed. TH commented that certainly some multi-trunk trees on Paddock Green need attention, BL added that some residents are concerned about such trees undermining their properties.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
To obtain quotes for low priority work and other works on Paddock Green	SC	GD	Unanimously AGREED

ACTION: FC/48/19 – SC

7. **Urchfont Pond – Algae Issue** - GD presented update slides following the Public Meeting on 30th May 2019 (all the slides used at the public meeting and the update slides used at this meeting are available on the

website under 'Latest News'). MB then explained the actions necessary to start to improve pond conditions as recommended by the Aquatic Consultancy Service, but emphasised that this will be a long process. He made two proposals as follows, that:

- i. an initial budget of £3,000 is agreed by UPC to enable the project to move forward and the key water treatment works put in place ASAP; and
- ii. JPR Environmental should be contracted to provide and install rented pump, diffuser and housing, apply Dyofix if needed, apply good bacteria, apply Siltex

Once costs for the long term planting solution using coir rolls are better understood, then the budget will need to be reviewed.

MB identified a possible initial problem in terms of the perceived low level of noise from the pump for neighbours / Pond Green users, but by hiring first we can monitor the level and if necessary investigate other mitigation scenarios before potentially buying a pump and housing instead of renting. TH asked how long the pump and aerator will be in use, MB responded 24/7 until the plants are established – about 18 months or so. TH suggested that maybe we should stop people feeding bread to ducks in the water, DS said that signs are readily available for this restriction. PC suggested that specific duck feed could be made available via the Community Shop as an alternative, after all one of the main attractions of the Pond is for kids to feed the ducks.

The Chairman closed the meeting for public participation – Mrs Bancroft expressed concerns about ongoing maintenance of plants along the pond wall, how will this be achieved, and the fact that ducks could hide in the planted areas and be difficult to recover at night.

The Chairman re-opened the Council meeting – MB stated that these issues had already been identified and will be considered further in discussion with the planting contractors.

Proposal	Proposer	Secunder	Resolution
To approve the initial budget of £3000 and instruct JPR Environmental to proceed with defined works as soon as possible.	DS	SC	Unanimously AGREED

ACTION: FC/49/19 – MB

8. Crooks Lane Working Group – GD reported that he and GC had met with the WC Principal Highways Engineer on 11th June to discuss potential for an extended footpath from Foxley Fields to the B3098. Because of the steepness of the banks and significant cost of supporting a pathway along the roadside, it would appear that a road-level pavement will not be feasible. However, the engineer made an alternative suggestion which will now be discussed further with the Snook family.

9. Urchfont School request for ongoing use of UPC Recreation Ground Hardstanding – BL explained that two applications had been received and copied to all councillors prior to the meeting, the first to cover a new lunchtime sports club every Tuesday and the second relating to an existing after school sports club every Wednesday. The latter has in fact already been undertaken for some while without realising the need for permission, the Head Teacher apologised for this error. Approval of these applications will require the School to comply with all the terms and conditions documented in the UPC Land and Use Policy.

Proposal	Proposer	Secunder	Resolution
To approve the two applications for Tuesday and Wednesday specified times use by the School	GD	GC	Unanimously AGREED

10. Skips provision for Rights of Way Group – Provision of a skip for use by ROW prior to this year's Scarecrow Festival had been very beneficial. Following discussion between MK and Linda Jennings, MK proposed that provision of two skips each year should be approved to facilitate easier disposal of green waste from footpath clearance. One to be provided prior to the Scarecrow Festival and one at a date in August / September, dates and locations to be agreed with BL in good time for provision of the skip(s). BL confirmed that current cost is £50 per skip. Discussion concluded that this is a very sensible proposal to assist the volunteers.

Proposal	Proposer	Second	Resolution
To approve provision of two skips per year for ROW volunteer use.	DS	MK	Unanimously AGREED

11. Best Kept Village Competition 2019

The Chairman closed the meeting for public participation and invited Mrs Cannon to speak. Mrs Cannon reported that BL had been notified yesterday that Urchfont had won the Kennet section of the competition (out of five Villages in the Medium category) and will now go forward into the County round with the other four section winners. This will be judged in July, dates to be confirmed. As section winners Urchfont will receive a certificate and a small cash award. Both BL and she had already circulated this information to members of the community who had contributed in the first round, it is now necessary to 'jolly up the troops' for the County round judging. A report is expected which will hopefully identify any shortcomings identified in the first round of judging.

The Chairman re-opened the Council meeting – On behalf of UPC, GD expressed delight at this result, congratulated all who had contributed and wished the Village good luck in the County round.

12. Preventative Measures to keep badgers out of Cemetery – BL confirmed that he had gained further information from Potterne Parish Council as reported in his Clerk's report (attached as appendix on website only). However, he was of the opinion that the Council should not focus on what other cemeteries have done, but consider whether they are prepared to take any action regarding reported damage in Urchfont Cemetery. Currently, albeit distressing to some grave owners, grubbing is significantly less than in 2017 and there is still no evidence of new badger sets below the cemetery which could interfere with remains. PC expressed the view that UPC should continue to repair and monitor grubbing damage as an ongoing activity, further action is not required at this point. TH commented that observations at the recent Cemetery working party indicated only superficial grubbing which in his view does not justify the significant cost of fencing. It was noted that fencing of any type will be difficult to install and potentially ineffective due to the uneven and unstable surfaces especially along the bridleway behind the cemetery and also because of some of the older graves being very close to and under bushes / trees along that boundary.

Proposal	Proposer	Second	Resolution
To continue to monitor and repair badger grubbing damage, no further action at this time.	PC	TH	Unanimously AGREED

13. Village Greens Risk Assessment – PC has submitted a first draft to BL for review. It was agreed to carry forward this item to the July meeting as further work is being undertaken.

14. PROW Public Enquiry – GD commented that he had read the decision notice, but was unclear on what the decision actually means. BL has written to PW seeking clarification. TH reported that he had spoken to Richard Broadhead to seek clarification on why the Order failed which appeared to be because it was deemed that anyone of small stature could not reach the bolt on the School gate. It is understood that Richard, Sally Madgwick and the barrister are to meet shortly to discuss the way forward. PW was of the view that he will be amazed if WC appeal the decision, after the 6 week appeal period the Order will not exist unless the decision is challenged by anyone. GD commented that UPC will wait to hear what WC has to say, but UPC will not in any event take any action to appeal.

The Chairman closed the meeting for Public Participation – Mr Hawkins expressed significant concern that this decision will mean that there will be no safe access to the Playing Field during School operational hours, more importantly he was concerned at the implications if and when the School closes and the land holding is developed.

The Chairman re-opened the Council meeting

15. High Street Telephone Kiosk – MK reported that the kiosk is already attracting a lot of interest and use from and by local organisations, some internal improvements are being considered to make it more practical. However, the external condition of the kiosk itself needs refurbishment (painting and replacement of Perspex panels with glass). A request is being made to the Scarecrow Committee for funding in this respect, but there will be a need to identify someone to undertake the work, any volunteers? LK commented that she was aware of refurbishment of another kiosk elsewhere that had been undertaken by a professional painter, the work was far from easy because of the age and type of materials used.

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

- i. MK recorded her thanks to councillors and the Clerk who attended the clean-up of Stonepit lay-by recently. She also thanked Linda Jennings, Paul Melhuish and Peter Cook who took part and provided equipment together with the support of local residents who contributed in various ways. An additional larger litter bin was installed.
- ii. PW reported that some Scarecrow Festival signs are still displayed around the Village, DS agreed to resolve this.

ACTION; FC/50/19 - DS

17. External Meetings – apart from the one reported under item C8 above, no meetings were reported.

18. Councillors' Reports and Items for Future Agenda

- i. The following items were noted for inclusion in the July agenda:
 - Nomination and Election of Vice Chairman
 - Updated Terms and Conditions for Chain Saw Use
 - Crookwood Lay-By Proposals
 - Village Greens Risk Assessment

ACTION: FC/51/19 - BL

- ii. GD reported that Derek Cook had advised that he will be carrying out tree works on his Baish land in July, none of the trees are TPO/in the conservation area so do not require planning approval.
- iii. PW emphasised the need for any noted fly-tipping not to be disturbed in any way as this may prevent WC identifying the offender and taking prosecution action.
- iv. PC reported the damage to the historic milestone at Lydeway Junction following an incident with an electricity company vehicle, this needs to be repaired. PW advised that details should be sent to him to facilitate recovery of repair costs from the contractor.

ACTION: FC/52/19 - PC

- v. PC reported the recent passing of ex-councillor Sean Donlon's wife, funeral to be at the Catholic Church Devizes on Friday 13th June.
- vi. GD reported that a contractor working for MB had offered to carry out works to facilitate water supply to the 'Scarecrow tea tent' triangle on Pond Green once the water connection had been finalised to the Duck House.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.23pm

Date of Next Meeting: 10th July 2019 in Urchfont Village Hall Conference Room commencing at 7.00pm

a. CLERK'S REPORT

1. Update on actions from April Meeting

FC/41/19 – Move road planings from Lay-By onto Oakfrith Path – Action in hand

FC/42/19 – Email Cllr Whitehead about possibility of a white sign showing Community Shop and Post Office – email sent on 24th May which also included a request for copies of enforcement letters regarding fly tipping on footpath from Stonepit Lane to the Cemetery. Enforcement letters sent to 5 households circulated to all councillors on 4th June 2019.

FC/44/19 – Re-Check with Potterne about perceived cemetery electric fencing to stop badgers – I have checked with the Potterne Parish Clerk who has made the following written statement:

"I have now been told that there has been a badger sett outside the cemetery for many years. We have chicken wire along the fence and gate at the entrance to the cemetery and it is thought this may be there to keep the badgers out. One of my councillors who is a farmer says that in the farming world electric fencing to stop badgers is known to be ineffective. Again, I am not aware of badger problems inside the cemetery neither are the long standing councillors that I have spoken to."

2. Finance – The financial Statement and Bank Reconciliation as at 31st May 2019 have been distributed to all councillors with this agenda. The accounts are in good order and have been fully reconciled with Bank Statements. Councillors are reminded that the end of year (31st March 2020) is overstated at this time due to lack of definitive spend information. It is essential that requirements and budgets for projects are prepared and approved as soon as possible to facilitate spend within year.

3. Audit of 2018/19 Accounts – the accounts and all supporting documents / records were collected by the Internal Auditor on 23rd May 2019, he was requested to return the documents and his completed report by 26th June to facilitate documents being sent to the External Auditor by the 1st July deadline. In the meantime, preparation of the external audit supplementary document requirements is ongoing.

4. Cemetery Gate – The gate has again dropped on its hinges and is now very difficult for anyone to open, especially elderly or infirm residents wishing to visit the Cemetery. In the past we have been able to adjust the top hinge, but this now appears to be ineffective. Cllr Stevens has inspected the gate and believes that more significant work is necessary to reset the lower fixings and maybe more. Investigation is ongoing.

5. Councillor Vacancy – The Notice of Vacancy following the retirement of Nicky Mitchell was published on 24th May with a deadline of 14th June 2019 for anyone to write to the Returning Officer requesting an election. Whether an election or co-option is determined, the problem currently is that I am not aware of anyone expressing an interest in filling the vacancy despite putting notices on notice boards, on the website and in Redhorn News to try and encourage applicants.

6. PROW Public Enquiry – I distributed the Inspectorate Decision Notice to all councillors which states that 'the Order is not confirmed' on 31st May 2019. I have also written to Cllr Whitehead seeking guidance on whether:

- The Decision will result in the WC Order being rescinded?
- WC is likely to challenge this decision?
- Whether WC be issuing some sort of explanation as to why this decision has been reached when so much time, effort and expense was incurred by WC on gathering evidence and taking / defending the Order that was made?

7. Parish Council Insurance Policy – The policy facilitated by Community First has been renewed for the period 1st June 2019 to 31st May 2020. This includes an agreement from the underwriters that they will cover chain saw operations in Farmers Field under the Employers and Public Liability clauses without additional charge providing that certain conditions are complied with. As a result I have put together draft Terms and Conditions for Chain Saw use which will be considered under item C5ei on the agenda.

8. Candles Round the Pond – A use of UPC Land application has been approved for this event to be held on 30th August 2019, but with a warning that the event may be impacted by essential works to the Pond regarding

the algae problem. I have agreed to keep the organisers informed of any perceived impact as information develops.

Bob Lunn
Clerk to the Council

b. COUNCILLORS REPORTS

i. Urchfont Trees condition survey.

After reviewing the report submitted in August 2017 we have a number of trees within the Parish that should have had work carried out on them within a suggested time frame. I have not seen any evidence of any work being carried out apart from the trees in urgent and moderate categories.

The report highlights that the following trees 0561, 0563, 0564, 0568, 0580, 0588, 0589, 1617, 0599, 1626, 1636, 1637, 1638, 1643, 1647, 1654, 0478 need Low attention which should have been completed within 6 month after the report submitted.

The report also suggests that a formal inspections of all trees in the parish should be carried out on a 2 ½ years cycle. (Due February 2020).

As the trees have had a further 1 year 10 months growth along with some extreme weather conditions since the report was submitted I propose that that we have a few options on how to manage the situation.

1. Obtain quotations as a matter of urgency for works identified in the priority categories low.
2. Bring the formal inspection forward to obtain an up to date report of the health of all the trees within Urchfont parish and then act on the report.

No matter which option that we decide to go with we would need to set up a working group with local residents from the Paddock Green to consider and agree an action plan for the trees that are highlighted in the report along with 'are the trees in the right place'.

Cllr Steve Cottle