

DRAFT Minutes of the Urchfont Parish Council (UPC) Meeting held on Wednesday 14th November 2018 in the Conference Room of Urchfont Village Hall

Present: Councillors: Day (GD – Chairman post item 3), Mitchell (NM – Vice Chairman post item 3), Cowen (LC), Kemp (MK), Creasey (GC), Stevens (DS), Cottell (PC), Hill (TH) and Cottle (SC)

Clerk to the Council: Lunn (BL)

Councillor for Urchfont & The Cannings: Whitehead (PW)

Members of the Public (for all or part of the meeting): Gill Hill, John Knight, Sandra & Ian Johnston, Malcolm Smith, Keith Brockie, Nicky Hammond, Clare Cannon, Brenda Potter

1. New Councillors Acceptance of Office – newly elected councillors Hill and Cottle signed their Acceptance of Office documentation and were given a pack containing Standing Orders (including Code of Conduct) and Registration of Interests Forms for them to complete and return to BL. The pack also included a UPC Privacy Notice for Members of the Council.

ACTION: FC/107/18 – TH and SC

2. Ratification of Chairman Resignation

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
To confirm the decision taken by all councillors at the time to accept the resignation of Cllr Mottram as Chairman on 23 rd October 2018	GD	PC	Unanimously Agreed (New Councillors TH & SC did not vote)

3. Election of New Chairman (and Vice Chairman if necessary)

This appointment(s) has arisen in year due to the resignation of DM as the elected (May 2018) Chairman, the new appointment will remain in force until the next Annual Meeting of the Council in May 2019.

NM proposed Graham Day as Chairman based on the fact that he has been Vice Chairman and has the necessary experience to fulfil the role. TH added that GD has shown the right qualities, LC supported these views. No other nominations were forthcoming. GD withdrew from the room to allow councillors to confer on his nomination.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
Graham Day to be Chairman	NM	TH	Unanimously Elected Uncontested

GD was very pleased to accept this appointment and went on to propose that NM (as the longest extant and most experienced Councillor) should replace him as Vice Chairman. She would be a great asset over the next 6 months to the council and the parish. NM commented that she had thought long and hard about this nomination, she had been horrified by events over the last three or four months and felt it very important for the Council to be seen as pulling together as a team to improve the situation. For this reason she was pleased to accept the nomination, but noted that she may elect to retire from the Council in April / May 2019.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
Nicky Mitchell to be Vice Chairman	GD	LC	Unanimously Elected Uncontested

4. Welcome by the newly elected Chairman - GD welcomed councillors and members of the public to the meeting, in particular newly elected councillors Hill and Cottle. He commented on the trial new room layout for the meeting and emphasised that he intended to follow the agenda, only items on the agenda can be discussed. In a change of practice in line with national guidance, he mainly intended to take contributions from the public only during the Public Participation item on the agenda. Councillors would then take such comments into consideration in their subsequent discussion of agenda items. GD then went on to record thanks to Bill Donald who resigned from UPC on 18th October. First elected on 3rd May 2013, Bill served continuously until his resignation. During his membership, he spent 2 years as Vice-Chairman of UPC and made other significant contributions to the work of the Council. The

two aspects, which stand-out for GD particularly are firstly his approach to financial management – while daily financial management is the responsibility of Bob Lunn, Bill reorganised the approach to financial management for the Council from a strategic management point of view. The process he adopted of separating expenditure between that necessary to maintain ongoing commitments and identifying additional funds, which could be used to finance specific projects, is one we continue to use today. He was also instrumental in setting guideline rules for the level of financial reserves which UPC should hold; and secondly, Bill succeeded Nicky Mitchell in developing relationships with the School, particularly in relation to the contentious issue of the Public Right of Way from the village to Oakfrith Wood. Despite a great deal of institutional sluggishness from other parties, his dogged persistence helped to earn a favourable resolution of this matter from Wiltshire Council public rights of way group. When this decision was appealed and a review by the Secretary of State (public enquiry scheduled to commence 24th April 2019) was announced, Bill continued to lead our endeavours. He has kindly offered to continue assisting our efforts now that he has stepped down from UPC. Urchfont Parish Council would like to thank Bill for his contribution.

5. **Apologies:** Cllr Mottram (DM)
6. **Declarations of Interest** – None declared at the meeting
7. Time set aside for Public Participation

The Chairman closed the meeting for public consultation

Malcolm Smith firstly wanted to talk about the Uphill development, the application for which was not discussed at the Eastern Area Planning Committee on 1st November and he understands will not be considered at their next meeting on 29th November. GD advised that this item was not on the agenda and that Mr Smith needed to request inclusion on a future agenda. In relation to Item 12bi below, Mr Smith noted that DM had admitted that he and another councillor had met with a developer (Qudos) in contravention of current UPC planning policy and procedures, he would like to know why and what benefit had been gained. Can this be included in the next meeting agenda in view of DM’s absence today? LC commented that he would also like to know why. It was agreed that this should be on the next agenda.

ACTION: FC/108/18 - BL

The Chairman re-opened the Council meeting

8. **Minutes of the Meetings of the Council held on 3rd and 10th October 2018** – to approve

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
Minutes of the meeting held on 3 rd October 2018 Approved unchanged as a true and accurate record of the meeting	LC	GC	Agreed with one abstention due to absence (New councillors TH & SC did not vote)

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
Minutes of the meeting held on 10 th October 2018 Approved unchanged as a true and accurate record of the meeting	PC	LC	Unanimously agreed (New councillors TH & SC did not vote)

9. **Action List Status Review and Matters Arising from the Minutes of the meetings held on 3rd and 10th October 2018** – BL went through the list of outstanding actions, some of which required reassignment following resignations, and the following was agreed.

FC/41/17 – Preparation of Welcome to Urchfont Leaflet – reassigned to LC – BL will forward the draft papers prepared by Richard Hawkins.

ACTION: FC/109/18 - BL

FC/52/18 – Set up and chair joint working group on scout hut re-build – overtaken by events – close.

FC/67/18 – Meet with Church on parking – GC confirmed that this meeting is still outstanding although the Village Hall parking area has been offered for weddings and funerals etc. when available.

FC/87/18 – Action to prepare for PROW enquiry – TH agreed to take on this task with PC together with additional support from Bill Donald and Richard Hawkins where necessary. TH confirmed that he already has the WC Case File and other documents associated with this important task.

ACTION: FC/110/18 – BL

(Post Meeting Note: Documents sent to PC on 16th November 2018)

10. Finance

a. Financial Statement and Bank Reconciliation as at 31st October 2018 – BL confirmed that these documents had been distributed with the agenda and that he had nothing to add to the comments made in his Clerk's report (see Appendix only on the website). No questions were asked by councillors.

b. 2019/20 Precept / Budget – BL explained that it is now the time of year that the Council needs to prepare for the 2019/20 budget and submission of the demand to WC for the Precept. He intends to present an initial draft budget along with the impact on local Council Tax of various % increases in Precept at the December meeting. BL will prepare the 1st draft budget for the fixed and running cost budget lines based on current year expenditure and expected increases, but requested input in ball park terms at this stage from all councillors especially for desired new / extended / carried forward projects by 30th November. The Precept figure has to be finalised and submitted to WC by 25th January 2019.

ACTION: FC/111/18 – All Councillors

PW confirmed that the cap on Unitary Authority increases remains at 2.99% without the need for a referendum. He believed that WC would not be in a position to apply a social care levy in 2019/20.

c. Project Proposals – None were presented

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

a. Clerks Report – BL added to his item on Dog Waste, that an enlarged article had appeared in the November edition of Redhorn Magazine but unfortunately a few irresponsible dog owners continue to not clear up after their dogs and evidence of this appears to be increasing. This reflects badly on those owners who are responsible, some even choosing to pick up waste from other dogs to try to improve the situation. NM advocated that people should be encouraged to report, name and shame offenders.

Chairman exceptionally closed the meeting for public participation

Brenda Potter stated that much of the problem might well be caused by dogs and owners from outside of the Parish, particularly on the path to and in Oakfrith Wood. She has witnessed vehicles entering the Village, parking in Crookwood Lane lay-by and letting several dogs out to roam free.

The Chairman re-opened the Council meeting.

b. Councillor Reports – no clarification was required.

- i. Friends of Oakfrith Wood AGM
- ii. Footpaths to / from Wedhampton and A342 crossing

LC asked who had taken over from Ian Maidment as Chairman of Friends of Oakfrith Wood. GC responded that a replacement had not yet been appointed, in the meantime for day to day enquiries he suggested contacting Bob Organ.

12. Outstanding Issues with WC

a. Proposed Quid Pro Quo arrangement with WC for assuming grass cutting and litter bin emptying roles in Urchfont – GD confirmed that, having confirmed acceptance of the agreement text at the October meeting, we are now awaiting the final version of the document for signature including updated schedules 2 and 3. He noted that the WC solicitor who has been working on this agreement leaves WC at the end of November, he hoped that the final document would be forthcoming before she leaves. PW agreed to try and ensure this is facilitated, BL to send PW an email reminder.

ACTION: FC/112/18 – BL

(Post meeting note: email sent to PW on 15th November 2018)

b. Code of Conduct / UPC Beeches Report with the Monitoring Officer

i. Code of Conduct - BL confirmed that he had been informed by WC Governance that the Decision Notice in relation to the Code of Conduct case against Cllr Mottram (DM) had been issued today. Having been requested by DM, BL then read out the following statement:

"Dave Mottram (DM) sends his apologies for not being available to attend tonight's meetings. The decision notice regarding the breach of code of conduct has been issued this afternoon. The decision is 'no further action'. He will discuss his position with various parties over the next few days and let the Parish Clerk and Chair Person know his future intentions with regard to UPC."

GD commented that he was very pleased that the matter had now been resolved, NM wondered whether Council should formally respond internally to the Code of Conduct decision noting that it has not had the opportunity to hear DM's side of the story due to confidentiality constraints and the fact that the case was submitted prior to the October meetings. NM suggested that this opportunity should be in the December agenda. PW suggested that it would be advisable to avoid code of conduct breach mode except for the more serious issues, none of us are perfect and will make mistakes on a day to day basis. He cited visits to developers and individual visits to planning application sites which may contravene policies and procedures. BL commented that it is important to distinguish between policy / procedure contravention, albeit wrong and should be dealt with appropriately by Council, and genuine breaches of the Code of Conduct; they may or may not fit both criteria.

ii. UPC Beeches Investigation Report – As requested by Council, this report was sent to the WC Monitoring Officer for review on 5th October 2018, a response is awaited. BL noted that he had taken the opportunity to seek the Monitoring Officers views on whether he should be sent all complaints from the public, as had been previously suggested by PW, or just those related to allegations of code of conduct breaches by serving councillors as had previously been understood. If necessary the UPC Complaints Procedure will be amended to reflect the Monitoring Officers views.

c. Overhanging Trees in Friars Lane – BL explained that this is an outstanding issue following comments from WC Refuse Collectors back in October 2017 that overhanging trees might damage their vehicles and the fact that they may have to curtail collections from properties in Friars Lane. Whilst WC agreed to take on the task of writing to offending property owners and taking enforcement action if necessary, we have still not received any indication of what has actually happened and the trees are still overhanging. PW asked BL to copy him the latest email correspondence with the Highways Engineer and he would chase resolution.

ACTION: FC/113/18 – BL

(Post Meeting Note: Email trail sent to PW on 15th November 2018, WC responded on the 16th November to say that they have instructed their contractors to trim back trees in the next couple of weeks.)

13. Re-allocation of Vacant Lead Councillor Roles following resignations – GD commented that there are number of roles that need to be re-allocated but maybe some can wait until the Council has settled down after recent issues. However, one role needs consideration now and that is Lead Councillor for Planning. In view of his past experience in the role and now that he has re-joined the Council, GD asked TH if he would be willing to re-take this role. TH confirmed that he would be more than happy.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
Trevor Hill to be Lead Councillor for Planning	GD	MK	Majority Agreed, one voted against.

PC commented on the fact that he had voted against this proposal because he strongly felt that recent actions of TH had almost caused the downfall of the Council.

14. Proposal to Amend UWLNP – Nothing to report. However, we have invited Mike Wilmott or another senior member of the WC Development Control and Conservation team to attend the next scheduled UPC meeting if possible to provide guidance on this and other planning matters.

15. Playing Field / Urchfont Manor / School boundary Fence & Hedge – BL stated that apart from a request for approval to undertake works on the playing field side of the fence, nothing further had been heard from

Urchfont Manor. Having consulted with interested parties, BL had sent the following response on the 20th October 2018:

"I have consulted with the School, Wiltshire Council and the Parish Council, all are content to give permission for works to be carried out from the playing field side of your boundary fence subject to the following:

1. *The School and Parish Council must be informed in advance of when the work is to be actually carried out.*
2. *It would be preferred if the work could be carried out when the children are not in school (e.g. half term / Christmas holidays) but can probably work around it if condition 1 has been satisfied.*
3. *The field surface / play equipment must be reinstated / repaired to the owners satisfaction if any damage is caused.*
4. *That full safety measures are put in place to protect the children and wider public whilst works are taking place."*

GC confirmed that the School has no objections.

16. Proposal for Memorial Bench in Cemetery – BL had distributed an email proposal from the family of Angela Dutton with the agenda. The proposal is for a new memorial bench to be funded by the family and placed in the Cemetery. GD pointed out that Angela Dutton had been a councillor and was known to many in the Parish. MK and MN suggested that it could be sited along the hedge adjacent to The Croft in the cemetery and would provide a good resting place for visitors to the Cemetery. Discussion centred around the type of bench and the wording which may be put on any memorial signage. It was agreed that the bench should be of robust manufacture, ideally constructed of man-made timber which requires far less maintenance. DS offered to provide details of the bench which he had recently refurbished in the hope that Angela's family might be receptive to providing a complementary bench. Full funding to be provided by the family with a duty of care to carry out any maintenance that might be required in the future.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
To permit the funding, provision and siting of a new memorial bench in the Cemetery subject to conditions.	NM	MK	Unanimously agreed

It was agreed that BL should respond setting out the parameters and requiring prior approval of any signage before installation.

ACTION: FC/114/18 - BL

17. Signage to mark Bratchell's Lane, Urchfont – BL had distributed a comprehensive email from Mr Bratchell, who lives in Australia, with the agenda. The proposal is for new signage to mark the existence of a lane running down from Church Lane in which his family members used to live, the cottages have subsequently been demolished. He is prepared to fund the proposal. Whilst the lane is apparently mentioned in local history, it was felt that more needed to be established about the status and extent of the Lane before the matter can be taken further. The type of signage would also need to be agreed.

The Chairman exceptionally closed the meeting for public participation

Brenda Potter offered to find out more details on the family and the location of the cottages where they lived, this offer was accepted.

The Chairman re-opened the Council meeting

It was agreed that BL should send a holding response to Mr Bratchell pending further enquiries.

ACTION: FC/115/18 - BL

18. Farmers Field – LC reported that matters are progressing nicely, budget was approved at the last meeting for maintenance expenses, some costs to date had come in below estimate, and a further proposal is being put together for project / capital funds. 87 trees have been identified for felling mainly because of disease, quotes are being explored for this work with the objective of achieving the most cost effective route. GD commented that the trees identified for felling need to be validated by a professional source, MK commented that this was being explored. A sizeable donation has been received (paid into the Council account) for wild flowers which will be planted in the

near future. Emphasis is now being placed on growing ties with local schools and educational type experiences in general.

19. Proposed Devizes Parkway Railway Station – PC reported that he had received hearsay information that the earlier proposed station site and access is being refined and that this project is progressing quicker than expected, provision in the next 4 to 6 years had been suggested. He had witnessed presumed Network Rail operatives talking with local farmers close to what might be a new access route off the A342 closer to Lydeaway. GD commented that he made enquiries with a number of individuals in Devizes and Stert who were involved in earlier discussions, none appeared to be aware of these changes. PW expressed amazement that Network Rail might be involved at this stage, the GRIP3 process requires that a viable business case is submitted before Network Rail get involved. This case would largely be dependent on getting a train service to stop at a new station, he suggested that this is unlikely to be agreed until the next franchise in 2022. He suspected that individuals within the Partnership might be trying to wind up progress for housing development purposes close to the station, this is very unlikely to be approved in favour of development closer to Devizes.

20. Environmental Friendly Initiatives – None reported, carry forward to the next meeting.

21. Preparing for Christmas – DS confirmed that he will co-ordinate preparations for collection / erection of the tree and lighting around the pond, gathering a team of volunteers to assist. NM again offered to provide coffee and mince pies for the team members when working on Pond Green. DS has all the lighting in storage, including new bulbs provided as a result of problems last year. TH suggested that a new more robust set of lights may be needed if the existing set proves unsuitable again, DS agreed to discuss this further with Royston Thomas. Anticipated timing for the erection of the Pond wall lights is around 7th/8th December. NM confirmed that the tree will most likely be provided again by Dauntsey's School following end of term (14th/15th December). Arrangements are normally made for the tree to be picked up and erected during the following week.

ACTION: FC/116/18 - DS

22. Update on Current Parish Issues not covered by above agenda items – PC reported that he had prepared a draft letter to be sent to Devizes Area Board regarding excessive speed on the A342 at Lydeaway and seeking a reduction in the speed limit from 50 to 40mph. Whilst this will not stop speeding, the reduction is likely to reduce the severity of accidents. Another serious accident happened recently which completely wrecked the two vehicles involved, one of which had travelled a distance on the pavement to try and avoid the collision. PW firstly advised that the case should be submitted as an Area Board Issue on the website rather than a letter which tends to get delayed. PW then re-iterated comments he made at earlier meetings regarding speeding as opposed to adherence to speed limits, citing St. Edith Marsh as an example of where it is almost impossible to keep to the 30mph limit. WC register all accidents recorded by the police at particular locations, then investigate and prioritise the need for any action that might be required in road layout, signage etc.

23. External Meetings – None reported

24. Councillors' Reports and Items for Future Agenda – GD commented very favourably on the recent Remembrance celebrations locally to remember the Urchfont 17, Council thanks go to all those involved with researching and organising the event. LC endorsed these comments.

Meeting Ended at 9pm

Date of Next Meeting: 12th December 2018 in Urchfont Village Hall Conference Room commencing at 7.00pm

a. CLERK'S REPORT

1. Update on actions from October Meeting

FC/96/18 – Send UPC Beeches Investigation Report to Monitoring Officer – sent on 5th October seeking his comments and also asking whether he expects to see all complaints from the public or just code of conduct complaints about serving councillors.

FC/97/18 – Invite WC Planning Officer to November meeting – now looking at possibility of December attendance.

FC/102/18 – Review of Complaints Procedure – awaiting response from WC Monitoring Officer on conduct of the Beeches Investigation and also whether he expects to receive all complaints from the public or just code of conduct complaints against serving councillors.

FC/104/18 – Response to WC regarding the Delegation Agreement – awaiting updated schedules and final agreement document for signature.

2. Finances at 31st October 2018 – Finances are in good order as shown on the statements attached to the agenda; the bank reconciliation was completed satisfactorily. Indicated reserve at year end is now more accurate but is dependent on full allocation and spend of project budget. Details of all actual expenditure during the month are shown on page 2 of the bank reconciliation.

3. Planning Administrator Role – Following the resignation of Sandra Johnston, I have assumed this role on a paid overtime basis with effect 1st November 2018 pending a review of the workload involved and how this fits in with my Clerk responsibilities. The review will take place early in the New Year.

4. Councillor Vacancies – Nomination / Applications were required to be submitted by 4pm on 26th October 2018. Of the three potential candidates who had expressed interest, one was ineligible because at this stage he did not meet all the criteria and another because of a new work appointment which will take up too much of his time. Both wish to be kept informed of subsequent vacancy opportunities in the future. The third withdrew for personal reasons. I have now been informed by WC Electoral Services that Trevor Hill and Steve Cottle have been elected uncontested as the only two applicants, no election poll will be required on 22nd November. Bill Donald has confirmed his resignation; a new vacancy notice will be issued by WC in due course which will determine how this vacancy can be filled.

5. Telephone Kiosk adoption – We have received a completion certificate from BT indicating that the equipment has been removed and that the Kiosk ownership transfers from BT to UPC with effect 1st November 2018. I have notified Nicky, Maria and Stephanie that they can begin their project plan implementation from this date. UPC is now responsible for the maintenance of the box, a notice to this effect has been posted in the kiosk.

6. PROW – Bill Donald has confirmed that he is continuing to liaise with Richard Hawkins to prepare for the Public Enquiry to be held in April 2019.

7. Dog Waste – Following comments from Philip Whitehead at the October meeting I have put an enlarged article in the November edition of Redhorn News to identify specific locations where fouling has been highlighted as being a particular issue.

Bob Lunn - Clerk to the Council

b. COUNCILLORS REPORT(S)

i. Report to Urchfont Parish Council from the AGM of Friends of Oakfrith Wood held on the 24th September 2018.

The objectives of the Friends is to manage Oakfrith Wood in line with its designation as a Local Nature Reserve with a view to conserving, protecting and improving the physical and natural environment of the Wood and conserving and enhancing its biodiversity value as an educational resource and to encourage an appreciation of the natural world and local environment by local people and visitors alike.

The previous year has in general terms been successful, the Working Parties held on Tuesdays and Fridays from September to March were well attended, in addition there were a total of 5 Saturday Working Parties undertaking a

wide range of clearing, felling, coppicing, dead hedging and litter picking. The Wood continues to be well used by the School and Pre-School and the local community.

During the year the weather at times was windy and stormy, sadly this caused damage to several large mature trees, primarily Ash trees, necessitating safe felling carried out by the Friends, another tree was infected with Honey Fungus and this was also felled.

The Hawk Conservancy and Wiltshire Wildlife Trust were thanked for their professional input, support and advice. The variety of wildlife continues to flourish in Oakfrith with badger/deer/fox/stoat spotted plus kestrel and barn owls which have been ringed and recorded.

The sale of firewood (65 loads) contributes to the Friends income and is intended to cover annual running costs with any surplus being added to the reserves.

Concerns for the future were identified as, an ageing group of volunteers – the workforce, a shortage of new volunteers and Trustees, the lower quality of the timber earmarked for felling and the increasing amount of bureaucracy the Trustees are dealing with.

Finally, Ian Maidment has resigned as Chair of the Friends after holding that position for over 12 years.

Graham Creasey

ii. **Footpath to / from Wedhampton and A342 Crossing** - Nick Plank stated that during this current planting he would spray out the route from the A342 across to the Planks Farm link road. This he has not done and I can chase him on this if you wish. He also agreed to build a landing point on the west side of the A342 next Spring and that we will move the 2 finger posts as previously discussed, though timing for this was not discussed. Personally I think UPC should wait until the Spring for all changes.

Bill Donald

(Clerks note: I have asked Bill to follow up on the non-spraying of the pathway during this current planting.)