

## **DRAFT Minutes of the Urchfont Parish Council (UPC) FC Meeting held on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2019 in the Village Hall.**

**Present:** Councillors: Day (GD – Chairman), Botham (MB – Vice Chairman), Hill (TH), Cowen (LC), Cottell (PC), Creasey (GC), Kemp (MK) and Hollyman (MH)

**Clerk to the Council:** Lunn (BL)

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

**Members of the Public (for all or part of the meeting):** None present

**1. Welcome by the Chairman** – All present were welcomed to the last meeting of 2019. GD took the opportunity to congratulate the telephone kiosk team for their Christmas display.

**2. Apologies** – Cllrs Stevens (DS), Kinnaird (LK) and Cottle (SC)

**B. PLANNING** – see separate minutes

**C. FULL COUNCIL MEETING**

**1. Declarations of Interest** – LC declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 6bi. MB declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 9.

**2. Time set aside for Public Participation and External Reports** – No members of the public present.

**3. Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2019**

Proposal	Proposer	Seconded	Resolution
To approve and sign the minutes unchanged as a true and accurate record of the meeting	GD	MH	AGREED with two abstentions due to absence from meeting

**4. Action List Status Review and Update Reports from the Minutes of the meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2019** – BL commented that the number of outstanding actions is reducing significantly. In the absence of SC, GC explained that he had offered to assist in getting quotes and initiating progress on tree works identified in the previous tree survey (FC/48/19) – offer gratefully accepted. PC stated that he is still trying to contact the WC Rights of Way officer to try and secure signage for the Wedhampton / Urchfont footpath crossing of the A342 (FC/81/19). PW suggested that he should email rather than try to contact by phone as the officer concerned is always out of the office.

**5. Finance**

**a. Financial Statement and Bank Reconciliation as at 30<sup>th</sup> November 2019** – BL referred councillors to his written clerk's report which had been distributed with the agenda. In response to a question from GD, BL confirmed that the agreed financial assistance to the Tennis Club had not yet been paid and will not be until the primary funding has been confirmed by Sport England. No other questions were raised.

**b. 1<sup>st</sup> Draft 2020/2021 Precept and Budget** – BL had distributed the 1<sup>st</sup> draft to all councillors prior to the meeting. In presenting the draft he reiterated that it assumed (based on 30<sup>th</sup> November information):

- That CIL money of £19617 is transferred to the main account and is spent on the lay-by project within this FY (2019/20)
- That most if not all current projects will be completed within this FY (2019/20)
- That monies are still available for additional projects to be started and completed within this FY
- Takes account of all known increases in Fixed and Running costs – see comments column.
- Assumes a Precept demand equating to an increase of 2% in Parish Council Tax

Based on the above, the budget Indicates that anticipated available funds will be insufficient to meet the whole of the budget proposed by >£6500.

BL emphasized that the real purpose of the budget at this stage is to inform councillors on the extent of the budget proposed and to determine the Precept requirement as a result, but in reality the Precept will be determined by how much of an increase in Council Tax UPC is prepared to justify to the Parish residents. Dependent on this decision the budget will need to be adjusted before the start of the 2020/21 financial year, adjustment planned for the March 2020 meeting when current year expenditure is finalised. Discussion then took place on the effects of setting higher percentage local Parish council tax increases in 2020/21, each 1% additional increase adding around £500 to the Precept.

GD then walked councillors through each of the account lines on screen to ensure that they were comfortable with line assumptions made, no changes were made. MB suggested that an additional project line of £2k for Highways activity should be added which might result from the survey about to be undertaken by MB/MH, this was agreed for inclusion in the 2<sup>nd</sup> draft.

PC stated that he believed that the Crooks Lane pathway should be the highest priority project for UPC based on comments from the community, it may be necessary therefore to consider and justify a much higher council tax increase as a result. GD agreed that it should be high priority, but that at this stage insufficient cost and practical information is available to determine the potential percentage increase effect on council tax which could be high. Additionally it is hoped to secure funding from elsewhere, but to what extent is again unknown at this stage. He suggested that this be considered further at the January meeting when more information may be available.

GD emphasised the need for all councillors to consider the information provided and be prepared to agree the PRECEPT and consequent Council Tax increase at the January meeting, BL will provide an updated budget for distribution prior to that meeting.

**ACTION: FC/89/19 - ALL**

**c. Proposed Farmers Field Project budget increase** – LC emphasised that this request is to purchase a winch is required now that the operatives have nearly completed their training and will wish to start the felling operation on site early next year. The winch will cost £450 but £200 is being funded by a Scarecrow grant. In response to a question from GD, MK considered the requirement nearer essential than desirable. On the basis of experience in Oakfrith Wood, GC sought clarification on what the winch will be used for, is it to pull felled trees out of adjacent standing trees when they are tangled? Also is training going to be provided in winch use? GD commented that the density of trees in Farmers Field would undoubtedly require disentanglement. LC confirmed this and also that he thought training in winch use is included in the current chainsaw training packages being undertaken.

<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Proposer</b>	<b>Secunder</b>	<b>Resolution</b>
<b>To approve a £250 increase in the Farmers Field project budget subject to confirmation that training is included.</b>	<b>GD</b>	<b>MB</b>	<b>AGREED unanimously</b>

**ACTION: FC/90/19 – MK/LC**

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

**a. Clerks Report** – BL emphasised that the ‘Pedestrian Crossing’ signs have still not been installed by WC, he will again hasten action. Despite assurances from DS, BL is still concerned that necessary internal works to install pipework / tap for the Duck House water supply will not be completed in time to utilise the current Wessex water quote for connection to the mains. The extension of the supply across Pond Green can be installed at a later date.

**ACTION: FC/91/19 - DS**

**b. Councillor Reports**

**i. Liaison with the Community Shop** – The written report is very informative. In response to a question from GD, MH responded that the suggestion to reduce stock lines in the shop was a summary of views expressed by a number of shop operatives and not an agreed way forward. GD stated that the shop is an independent organisation, but nevertheless a community asset which needs to be supported by UPC and the wider community. He had been shocked and concerned that similar shops in Rowde and Seend had ceased trading. LC commented that when his late wife was the shop manager a few years ago, stock was higher end quality rather than the more

basic and run of the mill goods as now. LC further stated that despite being an independent organisation, maybe the shop needs external guidance on what is stocked to attract and maximise sales. MB asked whether younger people are attracted to become volunteer operatives or to use the shop, GC responded by saying that most are either at work or looking after children when the shop is open. PC asked whether the shop constitution requires an AGM to be held, if so then the above concerns should be raised.

ii. **Urchfont Pond Algae** – MB stated that the Pond water quality is significantly better than it has been for a long while, but we still need to be certain of algae concentration before removing the warning signs. He proposed that UPC invite Bernice Brewster (Aquatic Consultancy) back to sign off on all the improvement work that has been completed and take further samples to hopefully facilitate removal of the warning signs and notification to the Environment Agency that the pond is clear. This action can be facilitated within the budget already agreed for this project. Councillors indicated that this is the best way forward and that the visit should be arranged.

**ACTION: FC/92/19 - MB**

iii. **Highways** – no further clarification required, indicated inspection will start almost immediately.

7. **Lay-By Project** – GD explained that the project has been delayed because of a desire for further discussion between all parties about the proposed Ecogrid surface (will it be sufficiently robust to withstand the weather we have had recently?) , dimensions of the lay-by and also on the requirements / responsibility to join the lay-by to the carriageway. Attempts are being made to set up an early meeting with WC, PW suggested that this meeting should be with Malcolm Bevan. Any difficulties to be referred to PW.

8. **Crooks Lane Working Group** – GC reported on a meeting that he and GD had with Morgan Jones (the Planning Officer for the application), following WC's recent final approval for the Uphill development. The purpose of the meeting was to clarify the approval conditions, in particular the advisory condition 20 relating to consultation between the developer and UPC on a new Crooks Lane footpath to the B3098. In terms of conditions stating that no development can take place until archaeology, sewerage and landscaping reports / drawings have been submitted, the developer has already provided these to WC who are now in the validation process. Assuming acceptance, it is likely that permission to proceed to build will be given shortly. Why has it taken 11 months to finalise the planning approval? This is because it is not unusual for the negotiation of the Section 106 agreement. This agreement covers maintenance, landscaping and provision of the two affordable houses which will be transferred to a local provider to guarantee availability in perpetuity. UPC now has a copy of the Section 106 agreement and Morgan Jones has agreed to write to the developer to advise them that GD and GC are the UPC representatives who will wish to talk about Condition 20. PW confirmed that there is no requirement for WC to monitor progress on Condition 20. On the basis that a new footpath cannot be facilitated without agreement of the landowner which may be affected, PC asked whether any discussion had taken place with the Snook family. GD confirmed that initial discussion had taken place and that an offer in principle had been made by the Snook family to provide land on the right hand side of Crooks Lane as you proceed towards the B3098.

9. **Street Parking / Verge Damage** – MB commented that verges outside his house and elsewhere in the Village have and are being eroded significantly due mainly to inconsiderate parking and/or driving over the verges to pass other vehicles. LC commented that Top Green has particularly suffered in this respect. MB and MH will undertake a review of the whole Village and provide a report and recommendations to UPC in due course. GD reported concerns raised with him that inconsiderate parking itself is an issue in some parts of the Village, in particular continued long term parking in The Orchard lay-by which has been the subject of a UPC letter to all residents of that road in the past. PW confirmed that as the lay-by is effectively part of the carriageway, then any valid road user/ vehicle can use it for parking at any time unless there are specific bye-laws or conditions within The Orchard house deeds.

10. **Village Green Risk Assessments** – BL reported that it had not been possible to complete this activity, it is hoped that it can be presented at the January meeting.

11. **Groundwater Conditions** – Following correspondence from the Operational Flood Warning Group (copied to all councillors), BL asked whether UPC should appoint a Flood Warden. PW commented that there had been a serious flooding problem in The Bottom as a result of ground water flowing from Salisbury Plain. The drainage systems were improved significantly by WC and the problem has not reoccurred. PW was of the view that a flood warden for Urchfont is not necessary, local flooding will always occur as a result of blocked drains following excessive rain. GD agreed, particularly as BL will continue to receive WC correspondence on flood matters so we

will not be left unaware of regional issues. PC commented that in a former life he was an Emergency Planning Officer covering a range of emergencies including flooding via a plan, does UPC and/or WC have such a plan? BL replied that UPC has a menu tab on the website called 'Planning for an Emergency' which includes a policy and details management of local issues in the event of an emergency. GD suggested that this should be reviewed to ensure appropriateness.

**ACTION: FC/93/19 – GD/BL**

## **12. Update on Current Parish Issues not covered by above agenda items**

i. **Welcome to Urchfont Leaflet** – MK asked whether there any spares, LC stated that he had a stock which is available on request.

ii. **Urchfont Telephone Kiosk** – MK reported that the kiosk has benefitted from some refurbishment although there is more to do which is being funded by the Scarecrow Committee. She wished to express special thanks to the Urchfont Sewing Group for provision of the elves in the Christmas display and also to TH for his red Father Christmas trousers. A simple competition is ongoing to try to link the kiosk and use of the Community Shop.

## **13. External Meetings**

i. **Devizes Area Board** – GC attended the last Board meeting primarily in listening mode, but hoping to find out whether CATG might be able to provide funds for the Crooks Lane footpath project. Indications are that CATG have only very limited funds left this year and that other possibly more priority projects are already on their list to consider. PW explained the CATG priority system and suggested that this should not put off submission of a request for funding.

ii. **Community Bus AGM** – PC reported that at the recent Bus AGM / Committee concern had been expressed about ease of access to and content of the Community Bus Page on the website. BL responded that in his view access is very easy with a specific menu tab under 'About the Community' and that content is the responsibility of the organisation to which the page relates (as shown on the bottom of the page). He rarely receives updates or comments from the organisation, in fact he updates the page himself having seen information published in Redhorn News. It was agreed that PC should seek clarification.

**ACTION: FC/94/19 - PC**

PC stated that the new bus is on its first journey tonight, the old bus has been sold to a disabled organisation in Salisbury and will be delivered shortly.

## **14. Councillors' Reports and Items for Future Agenda**

### **a. Councillors Reports**

i. GD reported that the Pond Wall Christmas lights had been installed utilising new bulbs, the Christmas tree will be erected on 17<sup>th</sup> December when it is available from Dauntsey's. Arrangements will be made to have the lights on for the Carol Service (22<sup>nd</sup> December) and late on Christmas Eve. Thanks to all the "lights" team.

ii. PC reported that there had been another serious accident on the A342 at the entrance to the Bell Caravan Park. A car left the road at speed in the early hours and would have crashed into the house if it had not been stopped by a large marker stone. PW confirmed that if the police were involved then the accident would be fed into the WC database which is used to determine the need for any highway improvements / changes.

iii. LC reported that Stert Parish Council are trying to reduce the speed limit by the Clock Inn caravan park on the A342. They have had a report prepared which recommends a reduction to 50mph. It has been suggested that adjacent Parish Councils may be asked to contribute to any costs. PW stated that the request to reduce the speed limit to 40mph was raised by residents of the Clock Inn Park, this request would normally be subject to the WC 3 to 4 year review. If Stert Parish Council want to accelerate the review then costs will be involved which they will be expected to incur. PW confirmed that the proposal currently proposes introduction of a 50mph zone from just before the Stert junction right the way through

link up with the existing 50mph zone from Lydeaway to Chirton. LC agreed to continue to review this matter and advise UPC of any firm proposals.

**b. Items for the January Agenda**

- i. Community Skips** – BL had recently written to all councillors to inform them that Devizes Mini Skips had announced their intention to cease trading as a skip provider with effect 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019 after some 30 years. UPC will need to consider the potential increased cost and service implications to continue the provision of 3 community skips per month next year using another contractor. In determining whether to continue to provide the service, LC was of the view that UPC needs to consider the impact of Household re-cycling centres and kerbside collections since the community skips were first introduced.
- ii. Bus Shelter / Seat by Crooks Lane** – BL had received a request to install such a facility at the bus stop near Crooks Lane, many people are seen waiting in all weathers for buses. Scarecrows may be prepared to contribute, but only at the request of UPC. Does this need to be considered in tandem with the Crooks Lane footpath?

There being no further business the Chairman wished all councillors and all members of the Community a Happy Christmas and closed the meeting at 8.55pm

**Date of Next Meeting: 8<sup>th</sup> January 2020 in Urchfont Village Hall Conference Room commencing at 7.00pm**

**a. CLERK'S REPORT**

**1. Update on Clerk's actions from November Meeting** – No actions attributed.

**2. Finance** – Financial Summary and Bank Reconciliation is distributed to Councillors with this agenda. Accounts are in good order, but still with a minimal 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 have also distributed an initial draft 2020/21 Budget and Precept requirement which I will explain in more detail at the meeting and try to identify adjustments necessary before the second draft for the final Precept decision at the January meeting.

**3. Crookwood Lay-By Contract** – Although a start date had been agreed of on or about 25<sup>th</sup> November 2019, which was notified on the website and in Redhorn News, this has had to be postponed due to the fact that the chosen contractor is reluctant to sign his contract without further clarification 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 shortly. However, a new start date is unlikely to be announced until 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 Chairman of the Tennis Club and I met with the UPC Solicitor on 25<sup>th</sup> November to iron out a few issues on the proposed lease and clarify preparatory / covenant requirements prior to signature. The Club Committee subsequently met with the UPC Solicitor on 28<sup>th</sup> November and signed the lease (lease term is 50 years commencing 1<sup>st</sup> December 2019 with an initial annual rent of £250) and supplementary legal paperwork. The lease was signed by the Chairman and Proper Officer (Clerk) on 3<sup>rd</sup> December and returned to the solicitor to await final legal formalities with WC before being dated and published.

**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 shortly to facilitate connection to the mains by Wessex Water prior to their deadline for the current connection quote on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

**Bob Lunn, Clerk to the Council**

**b. Councillor Reports**

**i. Liaison with the Community Shop**

Since I agreed to take this on, I have had a meeting with both Nicky Mitchell (Previous Lead Councillor) and also with Liz, plus over the counter discussions with Patti and Richard to understand the current set-up and any issues they may have.

There are four managers who take responsibility on different days, notably Richard (Chair), Patti, Liz and Barbara, and also David Myers who does the accounts as well as the pricing and programming of the Point of Sale software. Three managers are paid modestly for their services. The problem over some time has been a gradual decline in sales. It is agreed that without the post Office the shop would fold. The shop takings are helped by the annual Scarecrow Festival and if or when it snows. It has been noted that it tends to be older residents who use the shop more, and incoming new and younger parishioners use it less, which has contributed to the decline. More recently the community shops in both Rowde and Seend have ceased trading.

It was evident that there are competing views on what the issues are, and ways to improve profitability, some of which are reflected below, notably:

\*There is too much stock

\*The stock needs to be simplified (there is too much selection in some areas)

\*Some of the stock has remained the same for years and is 'stale' .This should be sold off and replaced by new fresher products.

\*When customers ask to order in a non-stock item, the said item sometimes has to be bought in multiples of say 6 or 12, often leaving residual stock unsold. The procedure has since been tightened so should now prevent future losses.

Other concerns

\*More volunteers are needed for the shop, despite having over 50 gallant souls at the current time.

\*Volunteers are also needed to make an occasional trip to Rowde and to the Cash and Carry in Salisbury. (the latter is undertaken weekly but any help would be welcome).

\*It is noted that there are very few younger volunteers, more would be very welcome.

\*The lease may have run out, but this needs clarification.

\*An apparent reduction in shop sales when the Post Office is closed, but some of these may be made up on days when the PO is open.

## **Cllr Martyn Hollyman**

### **ii. Urchfont Pond update**

During the course of November both dye and beneficial bacteria have continued to be added to the pond ( thanks to Claire Young who added them in my absence)

A further dose of good bacteria will be added this week.

The pond appears to be a dark inky blue which is the effect of the dye, which can now be seen clearly due to the considerable reduction of green matter.

A sample of the pond water will be sent for Analysis by Bernice Brewster on 5th December and the results are expected before the UPC meeting on 11 th Dec

The aeration pumps will be turned off from 7th December until week 2 January 2020.

No further additions of dye will be made until March 2020.

## **Councillor Mark Botham**

### **iii. Highways update**

MB and MH met on Tuesday 3rd December to discuss the approach they will take to review the state of viallge roads, verges, street signs and street furniture.

MB and MH will undertake a visual inspection of all roads and verges in the village - this may be complete by year end.

The report will describe roads, verges, signs and street furniture requiring attention.

The report will also contain reference photographs of items requiring attention which will also act as a bench mark against which to measure deterioration of verges etc.

## **Councillors Mark Botham and Martyn Hollyman**

