



DRAFT Minutes of the Urchfont Parish Council (UPC) Meeting held on Wednesday 8th March 2017 in the Conference Room of Urchfont Village Hall

Present: Councillors: Mottram (DM - Chairman), Mitchell (NM), Thomas (RT), Day (GD), Hill (TH), Stephens (AS) and Chapman (JC)

Clerk to the Council: Lunn (BL) **Planning Administrator:** Johnston (SJ)

Councillor for Urchfont & The Cannings: Whitehead (PW)

Members of the Public (for all or part of the meeting): Richard Hawkins, Philip Cotell, Marjorie Cox, David Stevens, Jenny & Simon Holt, Maria & Richard Kemp

1. **Welcome from the Chairman** – The Chairman welcomed all councillors and members of the public to the meeting. With regret he announced that Councillor Helen Gibb (HG) had resigned for family reasons, he expressed thanks to Helen for her contribution to the Council and Community.
2. **Apologies:** Bill Donald (BD)
3. **Declaration of Interests** – None declared at the meeting.
4. **Time set aside for Public Participation and External Reports** - participation reported under agenda items.
5. **Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 8th February 2017**

Proposal	Proposer	Seconded	Decision
To approve and sign the minutes unchanged as a true record of the meeting	TH	NM	Unanimously agreed

6. **Action List Status Review and Update Reports from the Minutes of the meeting held on 8th February 2017** – no actions are outstanding, some are still being actively progressed and others would be updated under subsequent agenda items.

7. **Finance**

a. **Financial Statement & Bank Reconciliation at 28th February 2017** – BL confirmed that copies of both had been circulated prior to the meeting. Current expectation is that the Reserve at the 31st March 2017 would be £13,474 (less than was used for 2017/18 budget setting) but this was highly dependent in particular on the outcome of actual project expenditure this month. BL confirmed that he had received the £3,000 contribution from Scarecrows for pond electrics phase 3, that he had made a VAT refund claim from HMRC of £7,496 and was chasing up all outstanding invoices for payment by the end of the month.

b. **Proposal for replacement UPC Notice Board in Wedhampton** – BL explained that the budget included £850 for the replacement of UPC notice boards. Examination had shown that only the board in Wedhampton needs replacement due to poor condition, all others can be refurbished. BL had been establishing costs from three reputable manufactures, costs which in all cases significantly exceed the budget. He presented a comparison of quotes for hard wood and man-made timber (Mmt) boards pointing out that although the most expensive the Mmt boards require no maintenance, have a 5 rather than 1 year warranty and are not subject to shrinkage or distortion.

The Chairman closed the meeting for public Participation

Mr David Stevens, a carpenter by trade, was asked for his view on the Mmt boards. He confirmed that the material looks like real wood, requires no maintenance apart from an occasional wipe down and are long lasting.

The Chairman reopened the Council meeting

Proposal	Proposer	Seconded	Decision
To approve an increase in the budget from £850 to £1,626 to facilitate the purchase of the Mmt board with polycarbonate glazing.	TH	NM	Unanimously agreed

ACTION: BL/11/17 – BL

It was agreed that experience gained by the purchase and use of this Mmt board will determine whether similar boards are purchased in the future to replace others in the Parish.

8. Lead Councillor, Working Groups, Clerk & other written Reports (attached at Appendix C to these minutes on website)

a. Pond Green and Surroundings – The Chairman thanked RT for organising the electrical installations on Pond Green, a very useful facility for events and Christmas decorations.

b. Defibrillator Update – The Chairman thanked NM for obtaining the grants and equipment from British Heart Foundation. NM confirmed that Richard Harris had agreed to install the equipment at Urchfont garage, she is still awaiting delivery of the other two cabinets to be installed at the Village Hall and Planks Farm Shop. The advertised CPR training sessions are filling up quickly.

c. Clerks Report – no clarification required, some items are updated under other agenda items.

9. Urchfont, Wedhampton and Lydeaway Neighbourhood Plan (UWLNP)

The Chairman closed the meeting for public Participation

Mr Simon Holt read out a statement (attached at Appendix A to these minutes on the website) summarising the significant benefits, local concerns and progress of the UWLNP before encouraging councillors to support and approve the final referendum version at this meeting.

Mr Richard Hawkins had emailed a statement (Attached at Appendix B to these minutes on the website) to all councillors prior to the meeting expressing and reiterating significant concerns about the apparent lack of transparency and consultation with the public and UPC members on information and intended changes during the various stages of the WC, Independent Examiner and UWLNP Steering Group review process of the Plan. He urged councillors to very carefully scrutinise the final version of the Plan before approving its publication.

The Chairman reopened the Council meeting

a. To approve final referendum version of the Plan - The Chairman thanked Mr Holt and Mr Hawkins for their comments and asked all councillors if they had any concerns about the final referendum version of the Plan and/or the process that had been followed to ensure that they had been kept informed.

GD commented that in the round the Plan is very good and will be of significant benefit to the Community. On the process, recognising time constraints he still had concerns about use of the UPC email decision process used during the review stages as this did not facilitate councillor debate, but was delighted that it is being discussed at today's meeting. RT supported these views but recognised that the review process would not have been easy, the task now is to consider whether the Plan should be approved and taken forward warts and all. TH supported the GD and RT views, in particular he felt that lack of openness and transparency had been an issue during the process.

Having read the whole of this version, NM said that she was very appreciative of the amount and quality of work done by the Steering Group, relatively speaking the Plan had cost very little in comparison to other Parish Plans. AS commented that a commercially produced document would have cost significantly more.

PW congratulated all concerned on getting this far with the Plan. He commented that production of any planning document will never be straightforward, but the Council and Community must recognise the benefits and status derived from such a Plan:

- Increased revenue
- Extensive protection of the Parish environment
- The fact that the Plan is a living document and will change

JC commented that as a relatively new resident in the community who had not been involved in the early stages, he believed that it is an astonishingly good Plan and is much appreciated.

Proposal	Proposer	Secunder	Decision
UPC gives full support to and approval of the Final Referendum Version of the Plan. BL to notify WC of this decision and to ask them to proceed to referendum on 20th April 2017. UPC are enormously grateful to the Steering Group for all their hard work during the production of this Plan and strongly encourage the Community to support the Plan at the referendum.	DM	GD	Unanimously Agreed

ACTION: FC/12/17 – BL

(Post Meeting Note: WC advised of this decision by email immediately following this meeting)

b. To consider preparations for the Referendum – DM stated that it is essential to employ all means (e.g. Redhorn News, Website, Parish Facebook page, use of Community Bus, WC website, posters and maybe mail drops) possible to encourage as many members of the electorate to vote at this Referendum which will be held on Thursday 20th April 2017. TH happy to assist DM in this respect calling on others to help. GD asked whether the Referendum question will require a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer, this is important so that publicity can be targeted.

(Post Meeting Note: We have been advised by WC that the question to be asked at the Referendum will be: “Do you want Wiltshire Council to use the neighbourhood plan for Urchfont, Wedhampton and Lydeaway to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?” – answer expected by UPC = YES)

The Chairman closed the meeting for public Participation

Mr Simon Holt confirmed that WC will undertake printing of the Plan and other documents for the Referendum. Some money will be refunded to UPC and Scarecrows as not all their contributions to the Steering Group have been used. This in sharp contrast to some parish councils who have been awarded £25k to prepare their neighbourhood plans using consultants.

The Chairman reopened the Council meeting

10. Parish Council Election – BL reiterated the process and timetable for the election as follows:

- Publication of the Election Notice – 15th March 2017
- Deadline for receipt of nominations BY HAND – 4pm on 4th April 2017
- Confirmation of Nominations accepted by WC – 4pm on 5th April
- Day of Poll (if required) – Thursday 4th May 2017

BL also confirmed that he had received 'expressions of interest' from four members of the public prior to the meeting, nomination papers had been sent to these individuals in addition to all current councillors. He stressed that the number of nominations actually submitted by the deadline will determine whether a public vote is warranted (12 or more) or whether councillors are elected uncontested (11 or less).

In view of the requirement for nominations to be hand delivered to County Hall in Trowbridge, DM suggested that most if not all nominations could be collected together and hand delivered in one go. Councillors to arrange.

ACTION: FC/13/17 - ALL

11. Use of Pond Green for Taste Wiltshire

The Chairman closed the meeting for public Participation

Mrs Jenny Holt explained that the paddock behind the Village Hall previously used for this event would not be available in 2017. The event on 10th September 2017 is expected to attract an increasing number of exhibitors. The Village Hall itself will still be used. One option being considered is use of the Manor Farm House paddock and/or Pond Green. As such she sought approval to use Pond Green and its electrical supply, the Green would be returned to pre-event state after use.

The Chairman reopened the Council meeting

DM suggested that as Pond Green is public space, then an entrance fee cannot be made, this needs to be thought through further. RT pointed out that charges for electricity will need to be considered. TH wondered whether the Sunday event on Pond Green might interfere with Church services. It was agreed that all these potential factors need to be considered by the organisers of Taste Wiltshire.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Decision
To approve the proposed use of Pond Green for Taste Wiltshire 2017.	NM	RT	Unanimously agreed

12. Parish Meeting Friday 24th March – DM outlined the possible agenda for the meeting, he will be putting together a Powerpoint presentation and can add in any material from other presenters:

- Parish Council 2016/17 report - DM
- Talk by Philip Whitehead, subject to be confirmed – PW confirmed that he is able to undertake this despite being subject to Unitary Elections.
- Urchfont Best - JC
- Neighbourhood Plan / Planning – TH
- Defibrillator Update – NM

Refreshments will be available at the start of the meeting, wine/tea/coffee/biscuits – SJ/NM

All councillors to attend the set up the Village Hall at 6pm.

ACTION: FC/14/17 - ALL

13. UPC Procedures – The current Planning Policy and Procedures states under the planning applications section at para 4.7b: “UPC will follow up cases with WC Enforcement Officers where development appears to have taken place without permission or not in accordance with approved plans.”

DM expressed concerns about this policy, in particular individual councillors getting involved in planning enforcement matters, this could be perceived as supporting or making a judgement following expressions of concern by the public. Only the Council as a whole should discuss perceived breaches in works that have already received planning approval, direction can then be given to the Planning Administer to inform WC for possible action. Individual councillors should not contact WC enforcement to identify potential breaches of a pre or post application issue. The Planning Administrator and/or Clerk can assist members of the public to raise potential concerns with WC planning enforcement officers by directing them to the appropriate form on the WC website. A link to this form can be put on the UPC website.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconded	Decision
To update the Planning Policy and Procedures to reflect the above position. Proposed revision of Policy to be submitted to Council for approval	DM	GD	Unanimously Agreed

ACTION: FC/15/17 – DM/BL

14. Best Kept Village – JC confirmed that judging will be mid-May to mid-June. He is in the process of preparing the application. A useful and productive meeting of the working group had been held this week and action plans updated. Four local judges intend to undertake a test review prior to the official judging period to identify any potential issues. DM asked PW whether WC could provide a road-sweeper vehicle to clean roads before the judging period, maybe during the 2nd week of May. PW will ask the question.

ACTION: FC/16/17 - PW

15. PROW – No update available

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

a. **Pond Green Policy** – DM referred to the fact that the ducks had returned to the pond, but the geese had not. Whilst no written confirmation could be found, it was understood that this was discussed some while back and implied by the UPC Policy which states “The pond is considered to be able to sustain no more than 12 ducks + two geese or 14 ducks with no geese, no more than this will be permissible”. NM confirmed that non-replacement on the demise of the current geese had been the UPC intention because the geese are considered aggressive and were a concern for parents of young children and vehicle owners. JC confirmed that geese can be a problem unless they are trained from a young age, he suggested that perhaps replacement with 2 larger duck breeds might be a solution. JC was asked to speak with the duck keepers in this respect.

ACTION: FC/17/17 - JC

Proposal	Proposer	Seconded	Decision
UPC Pond Green Policy to be amended to to state no geese permitted and limit duck population on the pond to 14.	TH	NM	Five for, 1 against Proposal AGREED

ACTION: FC/18/17 - BL

17. External Meetings – None reported

18. Councillors' Reports and Items for Future Agenda – AS requested that the email decision process be put on the agenda for discussion at the next meeting.

ACTION: FC/19/17 - BL

Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 12th April 2017 in Urchfont Village Hall Conference Room commencing at 7.00pm

Meeting Closed at 9.30pm

Minutes prepared by Bob Lunn, Clerk to the Council 10th March 2017

Simon Holt Notes for UPC Meeting 08 March

- The UWLNP is now ready for you as the Qualifying Body to agree to return it to Wiltshire Council.
- Parishes all around the country without Neighbourhood Plans are now finding they are at the mercy of greedy landowners and developers who will find it simpler to get planning consents for sites in Parishes which do not have a Neighbourhood Plan in place.
- The UWLNP has been criticised, but most complainants live very near sites which are listed in the Plan. I understand their concerns but residents should consider that the Plan will restrict the number of houses which can be built and how they look will be influenced by the Parish Design Statement. The Design Statement also gives guidance on how extensions should look.
- Your Neighbourhood Plan protects 9 precious Green Spaces. **The Plan** also protects Wedhampton & Lydeaway from any further residential development. I feel these are strong reason to support the Plan.
- You were first made aware of the proposed modifications 5 weeks ago, and a draft final Plan was sent to you last Sunday (with 2 paras still needing to be altered). **The final** version was sent to you on Monday and I trust you will now delete the many previous draft copies lurking on your computers or in filing cabinets.
- This Parish is like any other in that it needs to support its church, school, and pub. **However, in addition** this Parish needs volunteers to help keep the village hall, shop, community bus and other precious facilities of which this Parish is so rightly proud. **New houses** will strengthen the Parish and reduce the average age a bit as well!
- I sincerely hope you will now support the Plan and return it to Wiltshire Council. I also trust you will then campaign strenuously to get this Plan 'made' as it gives a clear and structured roadmap for house building over the next 9 years.
- The Plan gives you as Parish Councillors the opportunity to be more than just Consultees on planning applications. This is because the Urchfont, Wedhampton & Lydeaway Neighbourhood Plan is the first planning document which focuses solely on this Parish and when 'made' will form an integral part of the Development Plan for Wiltshire. **Please** support it.

APPENDIX B

To All Urchfont Parish Councillors - Urchfont Parish Council Meeting - 8th March 2017

I am writing this letter to express my concerns regarding Agenda Item 7a relating to the approval of the final version of the Neighbourhood Plan.

You are all probably aware of my previous concerns relating to the apparent mismatch between policies H1 and H2 with regard to the support for development which shows a predominance of 2 & 3 bedroomed houses and /or include small scale housing units for older people. These concerns were further exacerbated when it was discovered that the plan sent to Wiltshire Council for examination had been altered after public consultation. Indeed a number of individuals expressed their concerns to the examiner regarding this issue. Of particular importance to this matter was the fact that the Parish Council approved the version of the plan sent for examination by email and therefore denied themselves and the public the right to discuss the document in an open forum.

I have recently asked if a copy of the final plan will be made public before the 8th March meeting to allow informed discussion but to date have received no reply. In fact there would not now be sufficient time to thoroughly read, digest and check its contents. For such an important document particularly with regard to the community, this cannot be the correct procedure.

I was recently sent, by Wiltshire Council, a copy of the examiner's final report and associated documents. She has obviously carried out a thorough examination of the document and raised a number of issues. I was disturbed to find in Appendix 3 of her report, dated 17th July 2016 a note from her to Wiltshire Council and the Parish Council raising a series of 17 questions. The final paragraph reads:

'Please note that this list of clarification questions is a public document and that your answers will also be in the public domain. Both my questions and your responses should be placed on the Councils' websites as appropriate'.

I queried with the Clerk, on 24th February, if these documents were available and was advised that my email had been forwarded to the Chairman. I noted on 2nd March that the examiner's letter and answers had now been published on the Wiltshire Council Consultation page and informed the Parish Council Clerk. This was an important document but during my attendance at Parish Council meetings and viewing of the Parish Council minutes the councillors or public were never made aware of its existence.

After I made my discovery known, I received a Wiltshire Council email, forwarded to me which stated:

'There are so many documents it gets really confusing! When she refers to the 'Council's websites', she means your website and our website. She wants the documents placed on both our websites. When you have the final Plan with all the modifications made that Simon is sorting this weekend, and the 2 appendices, I would update your website then and put those and all the supporting docs on your website (or maybe after your meeting on 8th March?).'

Two questions arise:

1. Despite an article in the March edition of the Redhorn News stating that the final plan had been submitted, even by 2nd March it obviously had not! How much time have councillors had to thoroughly check and analyse the final document?
2. Why suggest leaving updating the Parish Website until after the 8th March meeting?

I would suggest that the examiner expected the questions and answers to be available in the public domain during or shortly after July 2016.

There was no Parish Council meeting in August but in September the minutes relating to the Neighbourhood Plan indicate (and I was present at the meeting) that:

'the SG has not been made aware of anything from the examiner which needs to be passed on. Total transparency has been assured through public consultation throughout the life of the UWLNP'.

Indeed a Parish Council proposal relating to the issue which was passed on a split decision reads:

'As the Chairman of UPC has confirmed to UPC that nothing significant has been communicated to the Examiner recently, the UWLNP Steering Group will re-establish its working process and any future significant communications will be shared simultaneously with the Clerk of UPC'.

Whatever reason for these statements the examiner's questions (and answers) should have been notified to the Parish Council members and been available to the public.

I have noted three questions, in the document, which appear of particular importance (but there might be others) annotated as per the examiners document.

2. Important views are shown on Figure 6.1. One seems to be in the same vicinity as one of the proposed site allocations, land at Uphill. Is this correct or a discrepancy? Are the two designations compatible?

Response - *This is correct. It is considered that the two designations are compatible.*

Who gave this response and how is it compatible. I am sure the local residents would like an answer.

3. The supporting text to Policy LB1 (Protecting Existing Employment Facilities) refers to Wildman's Garage amongst other sites, but this site is also allocated for housing development under Policy H1. I would welcome your comment on this apparent contradiction in the Plan. It should of course be noted that if Wildman's Garage site were intended to be subject to Policy LB1, then this would affect the provision of housing numbers under Policy H1.

Response - *It is unlikely that the site of Wildman's garage has a long term future as a garage. Hopefully the business will relocate elsewhere in the Parish – ideally at Planks where vehicle access etc. will be much easier. The existing site would therefore be available for redevelopment, without contravening policy LB1.*

This is an important issue. The original plan indicated 'Keep Wildman's Garage for employment use', which was based on public consultation results, but following the answer above the examiner has asked for references to Wildman's Garage to be removed from Section 7. In her report on page 27 she states:

*'Therefore I have **queried this with the Parish Council** and I am informed that it is unlikely that Wildman's Garage has a long-term future as a garage and the hope is that the business will relocate elsewhere in the Parish'.*

Who made that statement, what is the basis for it and why wasn't it mentioned at the public consultation meetings?

5. Are any of the proposed site allocations a) to i) in Policy H1 subject to any planning permissions or planning applications? If so, please provide me with brief details of the application number, the description of the proposal and the decision and its date.

Response - *Yes.*

Site B 'The Beeches' – application 16/01152/FUL for 'Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of five new dwellings and associated domestic garages and access improvements' approved with conditions on 16/6/16.

Site G 'Peppercombe' – application 16/01099/FUL for 'Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of two three bedroom and two four bedroom houses, garages and associated works' refused on 22/6/16.

The facts provided are incorrect the Beeches was in fact refused and Peppercombe approved. Whilst the answers may not be of any great significance to her final report it does show the importance of properly checking documentation prior to publication!

I understand that members of the Steering Group were also not aware of the examiner's questions and as such took no part in providing answers to her questions. The Neighbourhood Plan is meant to be a Community Consultation led document. Sadly it appears that neither the Steering Group, Parish Council or the Community have been allowed to become involved in its final stages.

We have constantly been warned of the dangers of delaying the Neighbourhood Plan as developers are about to submit planning applications on sites not approved in our plan. I cannot believe that during the 5 years the plan has taken to produce these developers would not by now have submitted their proposals. Approval at various stages has been rushed, often resulting in errors and confrontation with the community. I would ask that councillors take time to fully read, digest, check its contents and particularly debate the answers to the questions given to the examiner, before approving, or not, the final version of the plan presented to them.

As I have said in previous documents the Neighbourhood Plan is the result of a lot of hard work and will be used for the next 10 years to guide environmental and community development. As such it requires careful final scrutiny prior to approval.

Richard Hawkins

8th March 2017

Notices in Redhorn News, on the website and notice boards seeking expressions of interest from new candidates has resulted in FOUR possible candidates contacting me at the time of writing. I have supplied nomination packs to all existing councillors and those 'expressing interest', but it will not be until after 4th April that we will know how many valid nominations have actually been submitted and as such whether a public election will take place on 4th May. (if 12 or more nominations). It is suggested that we should all continue to encourage additional 'expressions of interest' / possible candidates from the Community.

- ii. **New footpath to Cemetery from The Croft** – the new fenced path has been completed giving direct access to the cemetery from The Croft without having to go through the allotments. New signage has been erected indicating that the allotments are on private land with no right of access to the public.
- iii. **Container on the Playing Field** – Most of you will have noted that the container used by the playground installation company is still in place some 3 months after works were completed. This basically because the haulage company does not want to damage the grass when they collect it; it should not have been put in this location in the first place. I am regularly hastening Playdale who are aware of the situation and progressing with the haulage company for removal as soon as practicable. Playdale have said that they will rectify any damage caused.
- iv. **Refurbishment of Parish Notice Boards** – Kit Dark has very kindly offered to refurbish the three notice boards in Urchfont over the next few weeks prior to Urchfont Best. You will note that we have already removed one of the boards at the Community Shop, the others will be removed as each is completed and re-fitted. Publication space in boards will obviously be limited whilst this work is completed, I will prioritise notices in this respect. A new board will be purchased for Wedhampton due to its poor condition.
- v. **Badgers digging in the Cemetery** - I met with the Wildlife Adviser from Natural England on 20th February. She was able to confirm that there are no badger sets within or under the Cemetery or Allotment grounds, but that those sets in the Holloway reasonably close by in both directions are still very active. Badgers will commonly forage for worms etc. 1 to 2kms from their home or supplementary set, especially at this time of year when babies are about. We noted several badger tracks leading into the Cemetery from the Holloway and Cemetery Lane which have been used recently.

Why are they now actively foraging in the Cemetery, maybe because the ground is a good source of worms and not too wet as the Holloway has been recently. All the diggings are from above ground and in the worst case go down 12 inches or so. It is considered unlikely that they will actually dig down further and disturb human remains, nevertheless it can be upsetting for members of the public to see graves disturbed. Fortunately the worst damage is in the older part of the Cemetery now rarely visited by the public, another reason the badgers may have picked this spot.

Basically there is little that we can do to stop such intrusions unless:

1. We deploy expensive anti-badger fencing buried to a depth of 1.5m around the whole facility including the gates and probably the allotments.
2. Alternatively we could install low electric fencing for use at night to deter intrusions, again this will be relatively expensive to install and maintain around the whole facility.

I suggest that neither of these expensive options are warranted unless the situation gets significantly worse than now; even if such measures are deployed there can be no guarantee that animals will still not find access.

The Adviser agreed that probably our best course of action is to fill in the existing holes, ensure that headstones are stable and then maintain a watching brief to fill any future digging. This action was taken on 24th February, but unfortunately new badger digger activity has taken place since in and

around the same old part of the Cemetery. I have erected a sign warning the public to beware of uneven surfaces and holes dug by badgers and other wild animals.

Bob Lunn