



DRAFT Minutes of the Urchfont Parish Council (UPC) Full Council Meeting held on Wednesday 13th March 2019 in the Village Hall (Main Hall).

Present: Councillors: Day (GD – Chairman), Mitchell (NM – Vice Chairman), Hill (TH), Creasey (GC), Cottell (PC), Cottle (SC), Kemp (MK), Stevens (DS), 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): Lisa Kinnaird (until co-opted), Mark Botham (until co-opted), John Knight, Valerie Day, Gill Hill

A. INTRODUCTION

1. Welcome by the Chairman – the Chairman welcomed all to the meeting. He took the opportunity to record Council thanks to NM, MK and Stephanie Szakalo for the excellent opening event(s) for the telephone kiosk in Urchfont High Street and to Bill Donald for his involvement including introduction of Bell the sheep.

2. Apologies – Cllr Cowen (LC) – GD took the opportunity to thank LC for final production of the Welcome to Urchfont leaflet.

3. Applications for two vacant posts – to approve co-option / sign acceptance documentation – Having received approval from WC to fill two vacancies by co-option, BL confirmed that he had received and checked applications for eligibility from Lisa Kinnaird and Mark Botham. No objections or comments were made by existing councillors.

Proposal	Proposed	Seconded	Resolution
To co-opt Lisa Kinnaird and Mark Botham with immediate effect.	GD	NM	Unanimously agreed

Both candidates were provided with a welcome pack by BL and then signed the required Acceptance of Office documentation before joining other councillors at the meeting table.

4. Declarations of Interest: Being a Committee Member of the Tennis Club, TH declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 16 (Tennis Club proposed clubhouse improvement)

5. Time set aside for Public Participation and External Reports – No public interaction.

6. Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 13th February 2019

Proposal	Proposed	Seconded	Resolution
To approve and sign the minutes unchanged as a true and accurate record of the meeting	NM	MK	AGREED (4 abstentions due to non-attendance at this meeting)

7. Action List Status Review and Matters Arising from the Minutes of the meetings held on 13th February 2019 – BL went through the outstanding actions as follows, all other actions are in progress:

FC/78/17 (October 2017) – Obtain quotes for tree works and set up Working Group on Paddock Green trees – this had originally been allocated to Royston Thomas and transferred to Dave Mottram, but now needed to be re-allocated. Work remains outstanding from the tree survey.

FC/67/18 (June 2018) – Meet with the Church on parking during events – GC regretted that this meet has still not taken place, he hopes to complete before the April meeting.

FC/89/18 (September 2018) Finalise Village Greens Risk Assessment – PC reported that this is still work in progress, it is taking longer than expected. BL suggested and it was agreed that presentation of the completed work at the May Annual Meeting should be set as the completion target.

8. Finance

a. Financial Statement and Bank Reconciliation as at 28th February 2019 – BL referred to his Clerk’s report which included reference to a significant change to the reserve figure indicated for 31st March 2019, an increase from £13,096 previously reported to £21,104 which will benefit the 2019/20 budget. This is primarily due to the fact that he had released project funds which have not be allocated in year (£6713) and to a goodwill gesture by Ringway who have chosen not to invoice the Council for delayed works to move gateway signs (£1146). GD confirmed that he and NM had been consulted about acceptance of the goodwill gesture, BL had subsequently accepted this on behalf of the Council.

b. Draft Budget 2019/20 – BL had distributed his draft funding analysis and detailed account line worksheet for the 2019/20 budget to all councillors prior to the meeting. At the meeting BL presented and explained his Funding Analysis in more detail to justify his proposals for the Reserve Target, Fixed, Running and Project Costs based on information available at 28th February 2019 and within predicted overall funds available of £80.8k. He then sought specific approval of budgets apart from the projects pot which would benefit from the balance of funds available in year and be approved on an individual basis by Council in due course. PC indicated that additional funding might be required to satisfy elements in his ongoing risk assessment exercise, BL commented that this would need to be taken either from the project pot or reserve dependent on circumstances at the time. TH wondered whether the target reserve should be increased, BL was of the view that the £13.5k was an appropriate amount for the Council financial scenario which has and would be accepted by external auditors. For the benefit of the new councillors, GD commented that the Council has a not insignificant budget of public funds which are managed on a day to day basis by BL, reported at each Council meeting and subject to internal and external audit.

Proposal	Proposed	Seconded	Resolution
To confirm the previously agreed target reserve fund of £13,500 at 31 st March 2020.	TH	SC	Unanimously Agreed
Proposal	Proposed	Seconded	Resolution
To agree the proposed overall Fixed Costs budget of £18,510 covering account lines as detailed on the worksheet.	GD	GC	Unanimously Agreed
Proposal	Proposed	Seconded	Resolution
To agree the proposed overall Running Costs budget of £20,781 covering account lines as detailed on the worksheet	GD	TH	Unanimously AGREED

c. Project Proposal: Tree Felling in Farmers Field (see written reports attached on website only) – Referring to her written report, MK reiterated the major problem with Ash dieback in Farmers Field and the need to fell at least 78 trees in the near future. Whilst quotes had been obtained from a local tree surgeon, MK firmly believed that the training of two FoFF volunteers was the most sensible and cost effective option to undertake this and future work in the Field. Some commercial assistance may be required in the future to deal with larger trees not covered by the proposed training. Potential use of local agricultural college assistance had been discounted due to logistical and timetabling constraints. In response to a question from GD, MK confirmed that the two volunteers selected are expected to continue their work well into the future and have offered to contribute 50% of the training costs. MK commented that she is looking for potential sponsorship / matched funding opportunities for FF activities, GC added that Oakfrith Wood had secured sponsorship from Stihl machinery to cover some costs. Whilst MK had addressed potential training costs, BL asked whether specific insurance cover had been considered and whether any new equipment / PPE will be required. MK confirmed that the volunteers have access to equipment / PPE now, but that in the longer term she thought that new UPC equipment would be needed; insurance had not been considered and BL was asked to enquire with the UPC

insurance company. PC advised that insurers may stipulate the type of training certificates they require and also levels of PPE to be used.

ACTION: FC/23/19 - BL

Proposal	Proposed	Seconded	Resolution
To agree in principle to proceed with the training of two Friends of Farmers Field volunteers on use of chainsaws subject to: 1. clarification and subsequent Council prior approval of definitive training, insurance and equipment including PPE requirements and costs 2. a 50% contribution to training costs by the chosen volunteers	MK	NM	Unanimously AGREED

ACTION: FC/24/19 – MK

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

a. Clerks Report – BL re-iterated that badgers are again causing grubbing damage in the cemetery which is causing distress to members of the public. On inspection the damage is currently less than in previous years when he had sought advice from Natural England. Apart from expensive fencing / electric fencing options, which can be easily breached by the animals, Natural England had suggested repairing the damage and continual monitoring. They indicated that the damage is happening at this time of year because young are being born and that they are seeking higher ground because footpath 31 where sets exist are waterlogged. They also indicated that the animals are unlikely to dig deep enough to disturb human remains. BL suggested that repair work could in the first instance be undertaken by the Council working party to be discussed under Item 13.

b. Councillor Report - Farmers Field – discussed under Item 8c.

10. Lead Councillor Roles – BL presented a marked up version of the current roles highlighting the need to re-assign roles which had been vacated through recent resignations. BL pointed out that he is the first point of call and undertakes day to day activity in relation to all listed roles, but that he will refer an issue to lead councillors when necessary. General Terms of Reference are documented for all lead councillor roles with supplementary requirements in some cases. Discussion identified the following which will be reflected in a revised listing to be prepared by BL:

- GD to take on Finance, Budgeting and Parish Contractor
- MB to take on Highways in conjunction with GD
- SC to take on Right Tree in The Right Place and Tree Survey Remedial Works and liaison with the Cricket Club, Village Hall and Army Ranges
- LK to work with NM on liaison with the School, Pre-School and PROW together with Youth
- DS to take on liaison with the Scarecrow Festival
- NM and MK to have Telephone Kiosk added to their roles

ACTION: FC/25/19 – BL

(Post Meeting Note: Draft updated listing sent to councillors on 14th March for agreement prior to publication)

11. Crook’s Lane Working Group – GD explained that this requirement derived from the approval of the Uphill Development planning application at the EAPC meeting in which an information note suggested that the Parish Council and CATG should look into possible improvements of pedestrian access from the B3098 and along Crooks Lane. GD expressed the view that he would like to include cyclist access, but at present it is limited to pedestrian. BL had circulated a draft Terms of Reference document to councillors prior to the meeting, this was intended to give operational parameters to the chosen members of the group and transparency to members of the community. NM commented that the TOR was very good and that the group should try to recruit someone from Foxley Fields as a member. BL suggested that others could be seconded into the group if necessary, but

initially it should be formed of two councillors and one member of the public. GD and GC both volunteered to be the Council members of the group.

Proposal	Proposed	Seconded	Resolution
To approve and publish the proposed Terms of reference (TOR) unchanged. GD and GC to be the Council members of the Group.	GD	NM	Unanimously AGREED

12. Fly Tipping on Footpath 31 (between Stonepit Lane & Cemetery) – MK reported that continuing fly tipping of mainly but not all garden rubbish along this footpath is depressing and needs to be stopped. Rubbish is being deposited not only on the banks but also on the pathway itself (grass cuttings and turf) creating very muddy and hazardous conditions for pedestrians and horses. MK suggested that rubbish is particularly evident adjacent to particular households bordering the path. Whilst BL had issued letters to all bordering households last year, it was agreed that a further letter should be issued. PW suggested that the letter should include reference to the fact that WC (as one of the few county councils which has successfully prosecuted fly-tipping) will send in enforcement officers to investigate if the situation does not improve. PW also asked MK to provide him with examples of potential offending households so that he can seek advice from the enforcement team. BL also reported apparent dumping of garden waste in ‘the Chute’ pathway between the B3098 and Friars Lane, tree cuttings have been wedged behind the litter bin and the wooden fence in particular.

ACTION: FC/26/19 – BL/MK

(Post Meeting Note: MK sent photographs of the fly-tipping to PW on 14th March 2019)

13. Spring Working Party in the Cemetery – BL explained that this is at least an annual event which is intended to generally tidy up and maintain graves in the Cemetery which are not now cared for, largely in the older part of the site. This is in addition to the regular maintenance carried out by the UPC contractor. Works this year will include filling in badger damage. NM commented that the event has in the past uncovered fascinating inscriptions on some old graves. As many Councillors and their family members are invited to take part for a couple of hours on a Saturday morning, refreshments will undoubtedly be provided as in the past. It was agreed that the event will be held on Saturday 6th April 2019 between the hours of 10am and 12 noon.

ACTION: FC/27/19 - ALL

14. Redhorn News (February Edition) – This item related to the perceived political content of an article by Archbishop Justin Welby in the February edition. BL reported that he had put on hold the action to write to Redhorn News following concerns expressed by some councillors following the last meeting. GD commented that Redhorn Magazine is the result of a merger of two earlier publications and is published by the Church, UPC contributes to pay for free copies to be received by all households in the Parish. Whilst GD understood the concerns expressed by PW, the magazine did not solicit the offending article and for this reason he did not believe a letter of complaint from UPC is warranted. This view was generally agreed by councillors, especially as the issue had been documented in UPC minutes. PW accepted this view on this occasion, but requested that UPC object in the event of any further politically based articles being published by Redhorn.

15. CPRE Best Kept Village Competition 2019 / Great British Spring Clean (22nd March to 23rd April 2019) – NM reported that there appeared to be willingness within the local community to take part again this year and with a determination to win. She had approached last year’s co-ordinators, Peter Cook and Clare Cannon. Clare is very willing to facilitate completion of the application (due by 22nd April 2019) and to co-ordinate activities necessary to prepare for initial judging in mid-May 2019. NM also commented that participation in the Great British Spring Clean, a national event, would appear to be a good way of preparing for the CPRE competition and community participation should be encouraged. Debate concluded that Urchfont should take part in both events, BL to include an article in the April edition of Redhorn News. NM to liaise with Clare Cannon to ensure preparations move forward.

ACTION: FC/28/19 – BL/NM

16. Urchfont Tennis Club – Proposed Clubhouse Improvements – TH, as a member of the Club Committee stated that this proposal has been in mind for some while and is intended to provide better and more robust facilities, including a toilet, necessary to facilitate better coaching and courses. Whilst the footprint

of the new facility is not much bigger than the existing, it will be necessary to move the tennis area fence back towards the field behind and to install septic tank(s) etc. The Club is looking for approval in principle from UPC as the landowner prior to initiating a planning application. Discussion concluded that this is a very good proposal.

Proposal	Proposed	Seconded	Resolution
To approve proposed clubhouse improvements subject to planning application and approval.	SC	MK	Unanimously AGREED

17. Parish Meeting (26th April 2019) – BL had circulated a draft agenda to all councillors prior to the meeting. Discussion concluded that the following changes should be made by BL:

- Include an update on the PROW public enquiry
- Delete the item on the UPC 10 Year Strategy

PW indicated that he would be prepared to make a presentation called 'Wiltshire Council goes hiking'.

ACTION: FC/29/19 - BL

NM commented that there is a need to produce an attractive colour poster to advertise this event and encourage attendance by members of the community. It was agreed that LK would consider producing this poster.

ACTION: FC/30/19 - LK

18. Update on Current Parish Issues not covered by above agenda items – None raised

19. External Meetings – None reported

20. Councillors' Reports and Items for Future Agenda

a. Telephone call about badger-baiting. GD reported that on Sunday 17th February, he had a telephone call from a lady who said she lived in Devizes and was ringing to inform him that she has information that a man with a history of badger-baiting has moved into Urchfont. She claimed that he is active with dogs, and also has a firearm for which he has no licence. Since this call was out of the blue, it was difficult to make complete sense of what she was saying, and he did ask her whether she had approached the police. She said she had and nothing was being done. She did not explain what group she belonged to, or how she had all this information. She was calling GD as she had been advised that I am Chairman of UPC. GD suggested she write to BL (and gave her the clerk's e-mail address) and that we would decide what to do once we had had a chance to study her letter. As of today's date, no follow-up e-mail has been received, and it is difficult to know what to make of this. Acting on advice, GD had informed the Police of this matter. They have confirmed that they have passed this information to the regional crime team.

b. The Beeches Investigation – GD made the following statement: On Tuesday 26th February, BL and I met Simon Holt at his request to discuss the Beeches Development Investigation. This matter was fully reported and discussed at the UPC meeting held in September 2018. The details of the reason why an investigation was held and the key results were included in the Clerk's Report (which is issued as part of the agenda prior to the meeting and also included as an appendix to the minutes) while the summary conversation was included in the main section of the minutes. Mr Holt feels that because the Clerk's Report is contained within a large document only published on the website, the results may not have been read and fully understood by members of the community. Consequently we are reproducing the details of the investigation and its

outcome in these minutes. By way of further information, Mr Holt advised us that the reference to a loan from QDOS was always incorrect – apparently it was an error – and BL advises that Mr Holt has recently been successful in having this expunged from the latest version of the Land Registry Title Deed for Hartley House (obtained by UPC on 5th March 2019) .

The results of the investigation were and remain clear and absolute and the prepared statement made at the 12th September 2018 meeting was clearly INTENDED to:

- a) close the matter as far as UPC is concerned;
- b) confirm that no further action would be taken.

UPC is required to comply with its own procedures to fully investigate the original concerns expressed by a member of the public. With hindsight the investigation could have been concluded more speedily, and UPC has acknowledged this in writing to Mr & Mrs Holt.

Extract from the Clerk's Report to UPC meeting of 12th September 2018, taken from the minutes of that meeting which were published on the UPC website and are still available for review.

Beeches Development Investigation – As you are aware the Council received an email from a local resident on 13th July 2018 expressing the following concerns:

"Sir, There is a lot of discussion within the village community about the provision of affordable houses in the village and in particular, one affordable house in the new development at the Beeches, namely Hartley House. It is clearly shown on sites such as "Rightmove" etc. as being sold for £187,000, and I have been told the Land Registry states that the cost of the plot was loaned to the purchaser by Qudos, the developer erecting the houses. As the purchaser of Hartley House at the time of planning approving was a prominent member of the Parish Council and spoke on several occasions in favour of this development, I believe the village has a right to know the answer to several questions.

- a. *Did the councillor concerned express an interest, either financially or otherwise, in the development at the time planning approval was discussed or thereafter?*
- b. *Were any entries made in the Gratuities Book regarding the Development?*
- c. *How can a four bedroom detached house with double garage be sold at what looks like less than the building cost while other less substantial properties in the same development are available for over twice the price?*

I ask these questions as many members of this community, and myself, are somewhat surprised by this transaction and believes it could seriously diminish the credibility of our Parish Council."

Following a UPC internal investigation, 'closed' Council meeting on 22nd August and agreement of the response wording with the Chairman, I sent the following to the author on 23rd August by email:

"Your concerns raised in your email of 13th July 2018 were discussed at a Council meeting last night and I have now been authorised to send you the following response:

A Council investigation has concluded that UPC Planning Policies and Procedures were fully complied

with based on information available at the time, specifically in answer to your questions:

1. The councillor concerned made non-pecuniary declarations of interest at all meetings where the various applications for this site were discussed, and OBJECT decisions made, by the Council up until 26th September 2016 when he resigned from the Parish Council. This is all recorded in published minutes of the meetings which can be found on the website.

(Note: A SUPPORT decision was not taken by the Council until 12th April 2017; planning approval was granted by Wiltshire Council on 11th May 2017)

2. The Parish Council is not required to hold a 'gratuities book'. Serving councillors have a personal responsibility to notify the Wiltshire Council Monitoring Officer within 28 days of receiving any gift or hospitality over £25.

3. The Council has satisfied itself that the quoted figure of £187,000 relates solely to the purchase of the land and not the whole built property. It has further satisfied itself through independent means that the total cost and payments made for the property was £187,000 + £423,000 = £610,000; and that stamp duty has been paid on the full amount.

It is hoped that the above answers your concern."

c. Dropped Kerbs in The Croft – BL reported that he had met with a WC Highways Engineer on 11th March to discuss locations for the installation of new dropped kerbs in The Croft which had now been approved by CATG in response to concerns raised by a disabled resident. Four locations had been identified and put in priority order for installation, top priority being given to locations at the far end of The Croft adjacent to car park areas. The Engineer is due to get back to BL shortly to indicate when works would commence and what the cost would be, UPC had already agreed to contribute at least £500. PW asked to be kept informed of progress.

ACTION: FC/31/19 – BL

d. 10th April 2019 Meeting – GD commented that he will not be present at this meeting, NM also confirmed that she will be unavailable. As a result of their absence, BL asked who would chair the April meetings, it was agreed that TH would step in for both planning and Full Council.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9pm

Draft minutes prepared by the Clerk to the Council – 14th March 2019

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

a. CLERK'S REPORT

i. Update on actions from February 2019 Meeting

FC/13/19 – Email Richard Broadhead regarding PROW meeting – emailed 8th February 2019, UPC/WC meeting now being set up in Mid-March to clarify positions.

FC/14/19 – Prepare updated distribution listing for Welcome Booklet – emailed 19th February 2019

FC/15/19 – Email to PW regarding Foxley Fields roads / grass ownership – emailed 14th February 2019, subsequently established that grassed area is owned by Aster Communities.

FC/16/19 – Email to PW to check on bye-laws relating to dogs – emailed 14th February 2019

FC/17/19 – Email to Redhorn News regarding objections to political article – put on hold 16th February 2019, to be reviewed at March meeting.

FC/19/19 – Article in Redhorn regarding CPRE BKV and Great British Spring Clean – included in March edition but no requested interest has been received from members of the public as a result.

FC/22/19 – Items to be included in March agenda – all included.

ii. Finances as at 28th February 2019 – The significant change in the accounts this month is the increase in the expected reserve at the 31st March from £13096 in January to £21104 due primarily to two factors plus other minor adjustments to expected expenditure in March:

- Release of project budget 2018/19 funds which have not been allocated to date - £6713
- A good will gesture by Ringway not to invoice UPC for the re-positioning of the western gateway and removal / replacement of the eastern gateway due to delays in progressing the work - £1146

These factors will assist in providing additional funding in 2019/20 to cater for some significant projects. Otherwise the accounts are looking healthy and all figures have been reconciled with bank statements. Minimal change is expected in the next month to the end of the financial year.

iii. Budget 2019/20 – I will present a draft budget at the meeting, but details will be distributed prior to the meeting. Sufficient funding is anticipated to meet all fixed and running costs together with a healthy project budget which will go a long way to satisfying anticipated requirements (subject to assessment of detailed requirements and necessary quotes).

iv. Councillor Vacancies – UPC currently has two vacancies which have received WC authorisation to fill by co-option. Two eligible applications have been received from Mark Botham (The Beeches, Urchfont) and Lisa Kinnaird (Friars Cottage, Urchfont), the Council will be able to approve co-option at this meeting. Both have indicated that they will attend the meeting.

v. Badgers in the Cemetery – I have again received reports of damage to cemetery grounds by badgers; UPC experienced similar damage in and around the same time in 2017. At this time, damage does not appear to be as great as in 2017 but can nevertheless be distressing for grave owners. At that time I called in a wildlife adviser from Natural England who advised that there is little that can be done without involving significant fencing / electric fencing costs. She did not believe that the badgers will dig deep into graves, they are interested in digging for worms and other grubs in relatively dry ground as opposed to the soggy conditions of the adjacent bridleways. Her advice was to fill in the damage on a regular basis and keep watch for any significant digging in or around graves, this advice was taken by Council at that time. I suggest that repairs can be undertaken during the impending Cemetery Working Party activities to be discussed at this meeting.

vi. Ringway – Gesture of Goodwill – As a result of me chasing an outstanding invoice from Ringway for the re-positioning of the western gateway sign and removal / replacement of the eastern gateway sign, they have now indicated that as gesture of goodwill they do not intend to issue an invoice for the quoted £1146 due to various delays experienced by UPC on this task. I have accepted this offer on behalf of the Council.

Bob Lunn - Clerk to the Council

b. COUNCILLORS REPORTS

Farmer's Field

Current tree situation:

Approximately 190 Ash trees in Farmer's Field have been identified as having Ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus* fungus).

'The appearance of the Hymenoscyphus fraxineus fungus in Britain has meant that the future of common ash (Fraxinus excelsior) as a woodland tree species is under serious threat. The disease is present in all counties of England, and experience in mainland Europe suggests that the majority of ash trees in woodlands infected with the disease will decline and die over the next 10–15 years. There is growing evidence that once trees are infected by H. fraxineus, and the disease has progressed to the point where basal lesions are exhibited, the trees become susceptible to colonisation by secondary pathogens such as Armillaria spp. (honey fungus). These secondary pathogens can result in butt or root rot, destabilisation of the tree making them prone to falling, and may ultimately be the final cause of tree decline and death. The concentration of effort should now be on managing woodland with the disease. Therefore we strongly recommend that all owners of woodland containing ash prepare or amend management plans to describe how this species will be managed, including giving due consideration to which alternative tree species might be used for restocking where required'. Forestry Commission England 'Public safety is likely to be one the biggest management issues for owners of ash in woodlands as the disease weakens or kills trees over the coming years, particularly as infected trees are likely to have considerable amounts of dead wood in the crown. Trees infected at the base by H. fraxineus, and associated secondary pathogens, may rapidly lose their structural integrity and anchorage in the soil because of butt and root rot. For example, ash colonised by Armillaria spp. begin to pose risks to forest workers and visitors within two years of basal necrosis formation, and after five years, about half of affected trees are likely to have sufficient decay to be assumed hazardous. Trees in areas with high levels of public access or other recreational use need to be monitored carefully for risks to safety, and some felling or pruning of dead or dying trees is advisable if risk assessments show they are a hazard.'

(Quote from Forestry Commission England)

Seventy-six of the trees identified need to be felled for safety reasons and to give surrounding trees more space thereby reducing stress and possibly saving some of them. This has been recommended by Steve Russell and more recently confirmed by Mark Malins of the Forestry Commission following his visit to the site on 23rd January 2019.

The remaining 110 plus Ash trees will be monitored closely but it is highly likely they will fail and therefore need to be felled in the future. This is in line with current Forestry Commission policy.

The felling of diseased Ash trees within woodlands requires a felling licence from the Forestry Commission unless they are dead or pose an immediate danger. Phil Milanes is in the process of applying for a licence. It is, however, worth noting that 5m³ per quarter is permitted without a licence.

The 76 trees that need to be felled have been measured and have a diameter of less than 380mm. Therefore, can be felled by someone holding a C30 & C31 certificate.

Future tree management:

Five Birch trees will need to be felled at some time in the near future. Due to their size, they will need to be felled with a top-down approach therefore, by someone with a CS39 licence. My understanding that this is not something that Oakfrith members hold but Will Cork does.

Mark Malins has also advised that all the trees alongside the path and main road should be removed at some stage. He advises that this is to reduce the risk of trees or branches falling on to people or cars and to introduce a lower level of planting, i.e, hazel which is good for wildlife, will allow more light into the field and is good forestry practice. In addition, there will be an ongoing requirement for ad hoc felling as and when the need arises.

Currently, we have a quote of £2,800 from Will Corke to fell and cut the 76 trees that need removing now. I appreciate additional quotes are required for sums above £1,000 but this at least gives us a rough estimate as to what costs are likely to be involved.

As mentioned previously, it is highly probable that the vast majority of the remaining Ash trees will need to be felled in addition to this, therefore, at least doubling the cost already quoted. This is without considering the additional cost to remove the trees along the road/footpath edge of the field.

Phil Milanes is making enquiries with regard to the recent suggestion of Lackham or Cirencester Agricultural College getting involved but at this time it is not looking like a viable option from a logistics point of view.

As previously mentioned, the trees in need of urgent felling and the majority of those that are most likely to require felling in the near future are of a size that can be felled by chainsaw operatives who hold a C30 & C31 licence. The cost of training is as follows:

Lantra Awards Level 2 Award in Chainsaw Maintenance and Cross-Cutting (QCF) (C30)

NPTC Awards Level 2 Award in Felling and Processing Trees up to 380mm (C31)

Greenway Training £650 + VAT

Greenway Training also offer a City and Guilds independent assessment for a cost of £199.50. From my enquiries, this appears to be a 'qualification' more suited for those requiring to build their CV. I am unsure this would be required in our situation. If however, it was, then The Royal Agricultural University offers the same courses as above combined with the said qualification at a combined cost of £775 (no VAT).

There is no doubt that from time to time a tree surgeon will need to be contracted to assist with the management of the larger trees in Farmer's Field. Indeed tree thinning cost estimates were quoted at approximately £2,000 every five years in addition to an initial £1,000 clearing cost in the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust Vision and Management Report which was adopted by UPC in 2018. The current Ash dieback situation is an additional problem.

It seems that much of what is required at the present time can be managed by a trained chainsaw operator holding a lower level licence as mentioned above. There is no HSE requirement to have two trained operatives. However, HSE guidance does suggest to 'avoid working alone' as does common sense.

I would like to propose that the council consider the training of two chainsaw operators to the level stated above in order that the much-needed work can proceed whilst at the same time saving a considerable sum of money.

Currently, Friends of Farmers Field have two willing volunteers who would be willing to be trained and have both agreed that they would each fund 50% of the £650 fees themselves.

Cllr Maria Kemp