

DRAFT Minutes of the Urchfont Parish Council (UPC) Full Council Meeting held remotely on Wednesday 9th September 2020.

Present: Councillors: Day (GD – Chairman), Botham (MB), Hill (TH), Kemp (MK), Cowen (LC), Stevens (DS), Hollyman (MH) 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 remote meeting): Mr C Armitstead, Mr M Smith

A. INTRODUCTION

- 1. Welcome by the Chairman** – The Chairman welcomed all present to the meeting.
- 2. Apologies:** Cllrs Creasey (GC), Cottell (PC) (pre Item 9) and Hill (TH) (post Item B due to internet instability)

B. PLANNING – See separate minutes

C. FULL COUNCIL MEETING

- 1. Declarations of Interest** - None
- 2. Remote Public Participation / Email input from members of the public and External Reports** - None
- 3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 8th July 2020** (No FC Meeting held in August)

| Proposal | Proposer | Seconded | Resolution |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|---|
| To approve and sign the minutes unchanged as a true and accurate record of the meeting. | MB | LC | AGREED – 2 abstentions due to absence on 8th July |

- 4. Action List Status Review and Update Reports from the Minutes of the meeting held on 8th July 2020** – MB reported that a complaint had been received by BL relating to Item C8 at the July meeting which he as Vice Chairman had been asked to investigate. MB is consulting with, and requires responses, from all councillors prior to responding to the complainant within the deadline quoted in the UPC complaints procedure. BL commented that there are few actions outstanding, most of which will be updated in subsequent agenda items.

5. Finance

- a. Financial Summary and Bank Reconciliation as at 31st August 2020** – BL confirmed that these documents had been distributed to all councillors prior to the meeting. Accounts are in good order but, as we are now almost half way through the financial year, BL reminded councillors of the need to identify new project requirements as soon as possible to facilitate budget attribution and completion in year. No questions were asked by councillors.
- b. Precept 2021/22** – PW advised that there may be restrictions placed on the ability of WC to deliver 20/21 Precept demands in full due to the fact that the anticipated Wiltshire Council (WC) council tax collection fund could be in deficit due to the effects and impact of the current unprecedented conditions. More information is expected to be issued to parish councils in late October / early November, but he suggested that early thought should be given to potential implications for the UPC budget next year.

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

a. Clerks Report – BL updated his report (Appendix a. Item 3) with the very good news that UPC had been awarded a £10,000 small business grant by WC, no conditions have yet been notified by WC but the payment has been received and confirmed by WC Accounts Payable. PW commented that as eligibility for the grant had been confirmed, it is unlikely that any conditions will be applied. GD congratulated BL for recognising the opportunity and submitting a claim on behalf of UPC.

b. Councillor Reports

- i. **UPEG Report** – to be considered under Item C11.
- ii. **Urchfont Recreation Ground / Play Area** – no update given or clarification requested
- iii. **The Lamb Inn, Urchfont** – PW confirmed that he had also contacted Wadworth's and had been assured that they are seeking a new tenant.

7. Land Adjacent to Yew Tree Cottage – In the absence of TH, GD deferred this item until the next meeting.

8. Councillor Vacancy – BL confirmed that the Council had received approval to co-opt a new councillor, but to date he had not received any written applications.

9. Tree Survey / Quotes – SC confirmed that Will Corke will be felling tree 1637 on Paddock Green on 16th October as approved at the last meeting. SC had contacted a number of other tree surgeons to request quotes for the remaining work identified in the survey but had not received responses, except that Will Corke has indicated that he will match any other quote for the work. BL referred to an email from Mr McEvoy regarding perceived lack of maintenance and potential danger of the Ash Trees on Pond Green adjacent to his property. BL had responded that significant maintenance had been undertaken in 2019 and no significant works had been identified in the 2020 tree survey. SC commented that he had subsequently viewed the trees and did not consider that works are needed at this time.

10. Farmers Field – LC reported that Phil Milanes, who has led the Farmers Field volunteers for many years, has announced his intention to retire following his next birthday in February 2021. As a result LC and MK are seeking a new leader and also potential storage space for equipment currently stored by Phil. Felling of trees will recommence on the last Saturday of September and in early October having been halted by the COVID restrictions and birds nesting, required social distancing will be maintained. Discussion is also taking place on potential re-planting. BL asked about the proposed hire of chipper machinery to dispose of cut down material, MK agreed this needs to be confirmed. BL also suggested that there is a need to ensure that sufficient funds are available in Farmers Fields budget(s) to undertake in-year works, purchases and hire.

ACTION: FC/42/20 – LC/MK

11. UPC Environmental Group (UPEG) – LC referred to his written report (Appendix on website only) in which he asked the following questions:

- That UPC permits UPEG to set up its own Facebook page. It was proposed that this should be deferred pending discussion at Item 13 and any subsequent consideration of UPC use of Facebook.
- Ask this evening if any councillor would consider filling the UPEG vacancy – no one present at this meeting indicated interest in the role.
- Alter the TORs to allow one councillor only to represent UPC - GD commented that UPEG are currently in breach of their TOR's in terms of membership. Circumstances must change to comply or an amended draft must be submitted to Council for approval at the next meeting.

ACTION: FC/43/20 – LC

GD reported that he had held a socially distanced meeting with Richard Bromley, who is the only member of UPEG he had yet to meet. Richard is key to delivery of the analysis of carbon reduction, as this area of

activity is one of his professional employments. He has previously undertaken survey work on carbon emissions with UPC in the early 2000's. GD suggested that this should be re-visited possibly alongside a new survey for comparison purposes. The importance of encouraging individual residents to reduce emissions was stressed, overall targets will be hard to meet if a co-operative approach is not championed. Richard is very busy developing a web-based interactive tool to link to his spreadsheet analysis and this must take his priority. Consequently, a revised timetable for delivery of the carbon reduction ambitions will be developed. Richard did confirm that he would be providing his professional services in this area to UPC at no charge (which is a generous contribution). GD congratulated UPEG on the very useful article in the Gazette and Herald. PW asked whether the new WC Environmental Officer had contacted UPEG as she is keen to work within and with a village environment such as Urchfont. LC had been given her contact details, but she had not been in contact to date. LC indicated that he will feedback to UPEG at their next meeting tomorrow.

12. B3098 Speed Zones – the expected report from WC Highways on potential additional measures to reduce speed at the eastern end of Urchfont had not been received. PW stated that he had received proposals from Highways but these did little to improve the situation. He is asking further questions before potential proposals are submitted to UPC including the potential to vary interpretation of the criteria for establishing a 30mph zone extension (e.g. recognition of property access points that are not immediately adjacent to the highway). Officials are due to visit the site this week – UPC presence is not required. He has also asked the WC School Transport group to look at the informal crossing and other factors at the eastern end of Urchfont and make suggestions for improvement. BL asked whether any progress had been made about the re-introduction of Speed Watch. GD had been talking to members of the former team who basically indicated that they had enjoyed the experience but felt that insufficient support had been available from the police and co-ordinating bodies. They all support the re-introduction but most would probably not wish to be part of a re-established team which means new volunteers will be required.

13. Connected Councillors – A paper produced by Lisa Kinnaird was distributed to all councillors prior to the meeting. GD thanked Lisa on behalf of UPC for putting together a professional and informative paper. However, he retained his sense of discomfort at the recommendation of Facebook as the best/only way forward to improve UPC communication methods / requirements. GD also indicated that he does not use Facebook and has concerns that UPC would be overwhelmed if it had a Facebook page which would need careful monitoring. He then asked for comments from those present.

- LC had recently signed up to Facebook and sees it as a useful asset for some community interaction, but he could not see that a council Facebook page would add value to UPC. The enormously improved UPC website and other current communication methods provide a good level of information to the community, we do not need more.
- MK was of the view that communication in the community is brilliant based on word of mouth, website, notice boards and Redhorn News, the paper did not really tell her what is lacking. Does UPC actually have a communication problem, MK does not think so. Do people actually want more communication, MK cited the well-publicised annual Parish meeting where only a relatively small number of the same people attend each year. A Council Facebook page would need a lot of monitoring to ensure proper and efficient use.
- MB said that he watches the Community Facebook page. Whilst he did not see that a UPC Facebook page would benefit the wider age groups in the community, maybe it would inform and encourage the younger age groups to participate more.
- Whilst SC confirmed that his wife had taken over administration of the Urchfont Community Facebook page and uses Facebook for her business purposes, he did not believe that UPC will benefit from the use of a council Facebook page.
- DS echoed the views of others, Facebook is far too easy to abuse and takes up a lot of time to monitor for an organisation such as UPC.
- MH expressed concern about the security of Facebook, recent press and media reports indicate unacceptable release of data. He does not use Facebook, there are plenty of other ways to communicate which are already available to the community.
- BL believed that the paper wrongly emphasised lack of community opportunity to participate / communicate at meetings, when in fact UPC are following (and indeed exceeding on occasions)

national guidelines and best practice by establishing a specific item on the agenda in which the public can personally submit their views on agenda items and can contribute further during the course of the meeting at Chairman's discretion – remember that the public have no statutory right to speak at council meetings. People will only attend meetings if they choose to, even if they are fully aware of a meeting taking place. It is also wrong to state that the website offers no form of interaction with the public, the 'contact us' section facilitates public interaction.

People in the community currently have to go and look for information on the website, notice boards, in Redhorn News or by contacting a member of the Council. GD suggested that maybe UPC should consider adopting more of a 'push' but not interactive method to get information to a wider audience in a timely manner. By offering and constructing an email distribution list, notification of agenda and minutes publication for example (or even the documents themselves) could be sent directly to those people who have asked for it. This would go some way to satisfying Lisa's desire for more communication without being interactive. PW advised that Easterton use a simple multimedia broadcast system called 'Boomcast' which does just as GD is suggesting. PW will request the Easterton administrator of this system to contact UPC with more information.

ACTION: FC/44/20 – PW

GD then made the following proposal:

| Proposal | Proposer | Seconder | Resolution |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| Not to commit to any communication or media changes at this point, but to investigate possibilities further before taking any decisions | GD | PC | AGREED Unanimously |

LC then referred back to his UPEG report and made the following proposal:

| Proposal | Proposer | Seconder | Resolution |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| To allow UPEG to set up its own Facebook page | LC | NONE | NOT AGREED |

14. Children's Playground / Recreation Ground – MK reiterated the main issues and proposals made in her written report (see Appendix on website only), namely:

- Recycling bins to replace the current waste bin
- Long-term budget requirements to cover future repairs and refurbishment
- Maintenance strategy for trees and grounds
- Establish a 'Friends of Urchfont Playground' group or similar to assist with care and maintenance and possible fundraising.

GD thanked MK and others involved for the excellent work already undertaken to rectify issues raised primarily by the 2019 ROSPA report. GD also recognised the need to look further at the proposals MK is now making, some long term, and supported development of a long term estimator of maintenance and capital costs and feasibility (cf. the forward cost plan for defibrillator maintenance). Whilst re-cycling is a good idea, BL commented that it would incur additional costs in terms of new bins and separate commercial collection arrangements. BL then suggested that with the impending 2020 ROSPA inspection taking place during this month (September), it would be better to delay further consideration of proposals until the report is received. It was agreed that this item should be deferred until the ROSPA report is received, hopefully to facilitate further discussion at the October meeting. BL to distribute report when received.

ACTION: FC/45/20 - BL

15. Refurbishment of allotment steps – DS confirmed that he had already replaced the rapidly deteriorating steps to the Cemetery Driveway with new railway sleepers at a cost of around £100. BL sought retrospective budget approval for this work so that costs can be refunded, DS to submit invoices. GD thanked DS for this work.

| Proposal | Proposer | Seconder | Resolution |
|--|----------|----------|--------------------|
| To allocate a project budget of up to £100 for the replacement of the allotment steps. | GD | SC | AGREED unanimously |

ACTION: FC/46/20 – DS

16. Update on Current Parish Issues not covered by above agenda items – none reported

17. External Meetings – None reported

18. Councillors’ Other Reports

MK gave an update on future displays in the Urchfont Telephone Kiosk. As there will be no ‘Candles around the Pond’ event this year due to COVID, the Kiosk Team have agreed that the kiosk will host a Candles display. It will run for two weeks from Monday 21st September until Sunday 4th October.

- The first week will be a promotion, with the intention of raising funds for The Friends of St Michael's Church which involves the wider community in caring for and preserving the church building and church yard. An honesty box and Gift Aid forms will be in the telephone box.
- The second week (w/c 28th September) the main event will be held; a ‘tree of light’ in the phone box. For every £5 raised, a candle will be added to the tree. Hopefully enough funds will be raised to make some impact. The donation box will be left in place to continue to collect donations throughout that second week too.
- In order to promote the display, during w/c 14th September leaflets will be distributed to each household in the village. This will explain the alternative event and direct people to the phone box for Gift Aid forms and to make a donation. A small number of posters will be put up around the village to remind everyone.

A Harvest Festival display is planned from Friday 16th October until Sunday 1st November

19. Items for Future Agenda

- a. Land Adjacent to Yew Tree Cottage
- b. UPEG update and proposals
- c. Children’s Playground / Recreation Ground
- d. Pathway to Oakfrith Wood (To be addressed when physical meetings in Village Hall are restarted with public attendance)

Date of Next Scheduled Meeting: 14th October 2020 (Likely to again be held remotely)

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.35pm

a. CLERK'S REPORT

1. Update on Clerk's actions from July Meeting

Action FC/41/20 – provide for planning considerations in August – Planning meeting held on 5th August 2020

2. Finance – The Financial Summary and Bank Reconciliation as at 31st August 2020 have been distributed to all councillors with this agenda. This information demonstrates that the accounts are in good order and gives detailed information on spend (July and August as there was no meeting in August) and anticipated spend against approved budgets. VAT claim for £6,888.77 was made on 4th August 2020, this was paid by HMRC on 27th August 2020.

3. Small Business Grant Scheme – By invitation from WC, I have submitted an application for an unspecified grant amount under this scheme which has recently been expanded to include Parish Councils who receive a Small Business Rate Relief. UPC receives this relief in relation to the Cemetery. WC have acknowledged receipt of the application. I have no idea whether the application will be successful, but it will be nice if it is.

4. Internal and External audits – The internal audit was completed satisfactorily, no observations or comments being made. Paperwork was submitted to the external auditor by the deadline of 31st July 2020 for his review as required by the relevant statutes and Regulations as amended by the Coronavirus Regulations 2020. A statutory Notice of Public Rights, covering a defined inspection period of 30 working days from 3rd August to 14th September 2020 inclusive, and publication of the unaudited annual Governance and Accountability return (AGAR) has been posted on the website via a link from 'Latest News' to comply with statute and regulations.

5. Councillor Vacancy – A Notice of Councillor Vacancy was published on 17th July 2020 to determine how the vacancy is to be filled. I have received a call from Electoral Services to confirm that the required number of requests from the electorate for an election were not received by the due date, as such they have authorised UPC to co-opt a suitable and eligible new councillor as soon as possible. To date we have received one expression of interest for the vacant post.

6. Children's Playground – I have been notified that the annual unannounced ROSPA inspection is due to take place during September. All recommendations made in the 2019 report have now been completed. My thanks go to Cllr Kemp for co-ordinating and facilitating the necessary works and to others including her husband Richard, Cllr Botham and Cllr Stevens who have assisted her.

7. Use of Recreation Ground Hard Standing by Urchfont School - Due to the unprecedented COVID-19 conditions / restrictions, following consultation with the Chairman I have given UPC approval for Urchfont Primary School to use the Recreation Ground hard standing between 12 and 12.30 each school day as an overspill playground to facilitate separation of class 'bubbles'. The approval does not include use of the children's playground equipment and the School have agreed to abide by UPC conditions set out in the Use of Parish Land Policy.

Bob Lunn, Clerk to the Council

b. COUNCILLOR REPORTS

i. UPEG REPORT TO UPC FULL COUNCIL

The chairman has asked me to present a full report of the latest position with regard to the environmental working group, set up at the FC meeting on March 11. This has been necessitated by the upcoming departure

of Katharine Wale, the current UPEG secretary, who first mooted the idea that Urchfont should join with the many town and parish councils across the country who have recognised and declared a climate and environmental emergency and are actively addressing this.

1. Katharine Wale

Katharine is due to leave the parish at the end of August and arrangements have already been decided as to who will take over her areas of responsibility. Lisa Kinnaird will take over as secretary of the group while Peter Newell will take on responsibility for monitoring and amending the timeline for putting into effect the aims, objectives and milestones. We have two new members: Sam Dixon, who is assisting Peter with the timeline, and Liz Clifton-Page. Also, Charlotte Hill-Baldwin has offered to provide added support with the tree and hedge-planting project. Lewis Cowen, chairman of the working group, is to keep track of the outstanding actions that need to be pursued.

Can I take this opportunity to thank Katharine for the immense amount of work she has put in to set UPC on the right track to achieve carbon neutrality in the parish by Wiltshire Council's objective of 2030.

2. Carbon footprint audit

Although the group has already made a start in pursuing UPC's objectives within the aims, objectives and milestones already approved by the parish council - devising, printing and distributing a leaflet of Top Tips to all households in the parish – much still needs to be done. The main thrust of our efforts relies on data provided by an up-to-date audit of the parish's carbon footprint. Richard Bromley, a professional environmental consultant, has been a member of UPEG since its inception and has committed to preparing the audit free gratis. However, his own workload, for councils like Urchfont' who have to pay for his advice, has increased considerably in the last few months and he has so far been unable to progress this work very far.

We recognise that his business must come first, and we have assured him that we are prepared to wait for the audit until it becomes possible for him to complete it. The alternative would be to retain the services of a different consultant, which could involve UPC in considerable cost.

3. Tree planting

The planting of trees, hedges and wildflower meadows remains a central plank of UPEG's policy for carbon reduction in the parish. But we have experienced some resistance from landowners who have been approached, apart from Nick Plank who is keen to plant trees on his property. We are in discussion with him at the moment to further this aim. Also, we continue to pursue other sites, but we are particularly keen to follow up planting on land owned or controlled by the parish council and would ask councillors for suggestions.

4. Facebook page

The group has agreed that it would be beneficial to have its own Facebook page to distribute information among interested parishioners. It would be a "closed" page, in other words, it would only be available to those who apply to join and they would have to complete a short questionnaire. The page would be regularly monitored by a member of UPEG.

Motion: That UPC permits UPEG to set up its own Facebook page

5. List of suppliers to UPC

In order to further the move to carbon neutrality, UPC needs to assure itself that its suppliers and contractors are themselves making efforts to reduce their carbon output. UPEG will produce a questionnaire that needs to be completed by suppliers to satisfy UPC that this is the case. Could the parish clerk provide us with a list of suppliers? (Note: List supplied to UPEG Chairman 1st September 2020)

6. Councillor vacancy

Since the resignation of Lisa Kinnaird from the parish council, we have been one councillor short on UPEG according to its terms of reference, which require that two council members represent UPC. I have

personally approached one councillor, who very kindly considered coming on but felt unable to do so. I then emailed other councillors but had no reply. UPC must now consider what recourse must be followed:

- a. Ask this evening if any councillor would consider filling the vacancy;**
- b. Alter the TORs to allow one councillor only to represent UPC;**

It is time members accepted the importance of a fight against global warming as a priority. Although we live in a green and pleasant land, the parish is already seeing the effects of global warming. We are part of the world and must accept our responsibilities as far as leaving a planet worth inhabiting to successive generations.

Cllr Lewis Cowen

ii. Urchfont Recreation Ground / Play Area.

The recommendations made by ROSPA following last years playground inspection have been completed. The next inspection will take place in September 2020

Some issues highlighted in last year's ROSPA report will continue to be a problem and require constant monitoring. In particular, litter, deliberate damage to the shelter and tables and the loss of plugs and caps from the wooden structures. I am unable to monitor the equipment on a daily basis but do so as often as I can. I would be grateful if any other councillors are in the area would perhaps take the opportunity to make a quick check.

Some of the play equipment is now beginning to show signs of wear and tear and I suspect it will not be too long until we have to consider some serious refurbishment. The fence between the play area and the hard ball court is showing signs of rot in addition to the strimming damage. Whilst not a serious problem at this time repairs will need to be considered in the next year or so. The shelter also requires refurbishment, some of the damage appears to be deliberate and some is wear and tear or wood rot.

Despite having cleared a significant amount of moss and weeds on and around the hard ball court, cut back the trees and brambles, the regrowth is more than I can keep up with. The top right hand area needs further work and I suggest it may require a more professional approach. We also need to consider a more regular grounds maintenance routine for this area.

Litter continues to be a problem. Much of the rubbish that is disposed of correctly is recyclable but ends up in the one small general waste bin. The bin is not of a sufficient size for its current use despite regular emptying.

There has been a significant increase in footfall since lockdown measures were eased and it's been wonderful to see so many people making use of the play area in recent weeks. I hope this will continue. However with increased use comes an increase in wear and tear. Currently we have a lovely facility used by so many in the community both for child's play, adult exercise and more recently the school, to help with social distancing at break times. Perhaps now is the time to ask the users of this facility if they would consider supporting it?

At the forthcoming meeting I propose we consider the following;

- Recycling bins to replace the current waste bin
- Long-term budget requirements to cover future repairs and refurbishment
- Maintenance strategy for trees and grounds
- A 'Friends of Urchfont Playground' or similar to assist with care and maintenance and possible fundraising.

Cllr Maria Kemp

iii. The Lamb Inn, Urchfont

As Councillors know, The Lamb Inn has not reopened following the relaxation of lockdown and the tenants (Julie and Alex Elliot) have relinquished their tenancy.

I have contacted Tracey Sharp, Retail Development Manager of Wadworth & Co. Ltd who has provided the following statement:

"I can confirm that we are actively marketing the pub and have been interviewing for a suitable replacement tenant.

We have every intention to reopen the Lamb under new operators as soon as possible, unfortunately however we are not in a position to confirm a date as yet."

Cllr Graham Day