



DRAFT Minutes of the Urchfont Parish Council (UPC) Full Council Meeting held in Urchfont Village Hall on Wednesday 14th June 2023 – Version 2

Present: Councillors: Moscrop (PM - Chair), Bamber (SB), Gibb (HG), Rotherham (PR), Hill (TR) and Rotherford (JR)

Clerk to the Council: Lunn (BL)

Councilor for Urchfont & Bishops Cannings: Whitehead (PW)

Members of the Public (for all or part of the meeting): Maria & Richard Kemp, Brenda Potter, Nicky Hammond, Peter Cook

A. INTRODUCTION

1. Welcome – PM welcomed all to the meeting. She then went on to highlight her expectations for the way meetings are conducted to ensure timely completion of business;

- Members of the public have no legal right to speak at a Council meeting; provision is however made for them to speak for normally three minutes during the public participation item.
- Members of the public cannot interrupt or speak during the Council session unless specifically invited by the Chair (limited to 3 minutes)
- She expects councillors to keep to the point at all times and keep observations / comments brief

2. Apologies: Cllrs Hollyman (MH) and Holt (SH)

3. Ratify Resolutions Made at Meeting on 10th May 2023

- a. Election of Chairman – Pam Moscrop
- b. Appointment of Internal Auditor – Paul Papworth-Smith
- c. All subscriptions approved
- d. Financial Assistance award to the Community Shop - £1500
- e. Funding for Pond Electrics Upgrade - £880 + VAT
- f. Minutes of 14th April 2023 – Approved
- g. Ratification of payments made in April 2023 – Ratified
- h. UPEG budget for 23/24 - £2000 approved

PM explained that, due to a representation from a member of the public (Mr. Myers) which amongst other things identified a perceived breakdown of Procedure in relation to conflicts of interest, it is proposed to reconsider this application at the July meeting. A copy of Mr. Myers latest representation will be distributed to all councillors, will be attached to the agenda for the July meeting and should be read alongside detailed content of the May meeting minutes. (Post Meeting Note: Distributed to councillors on 16th June 2023) The Shop and Mr. Myers may make further representations at the July meeting if they so wish. BL commented that this is the first time since he joined the Council 12 years ago that it has had to use this ratification process.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
To ratify all the above resolutions with the exception of item d in accord with Standing Orders Clause 6 and to approve the reconsideration of item d (shop financial assistance application) at the July meeting.	TH	PR	AGREED Unanimously

4. Completion of Annual Business

i. **Election of Vice Chairman** (Standing Orders Clause 12e) – In the absence of any other nomination, PM made the following proposal on the understanding that the Sarah is willing to undertake the role.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconded	Resolution
To elect Sarah Bamber as the Vice Chairman	PM	HG	AGREED unanimously

ii. **Appointment of Planning Lead** (Standing Orders Clause 12g) – In the absence of any other nominations and following the submission from SH which had been distributed to all councillors, PM made the following proposal:

Proposal	Proposer	Seconded	Resolution
To appoint Simon Holt as Lead of Planning	PM	PR	AGREED unanimously

- iii. **Election of representatives** – to receive nominations and elect (22/23 Representatives in brackets)
- Devizes Area Board (MB and MH)
 - Parish Trust (MB)
 - LHFIG

PM expressed the view that at least one of the Chair / Vice Chair or Lead of Planning should attend the Devizes Area Board when they are available and appropriate.
TH volunteered to represent UPC at the Parish Trust.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconded	Resolution
Devizes Area Board – Chair, Vice Chair or Lead of Planning Parish Trust – TH LHFIG – Lead role for UPC Highways	PM	HG	AGREED Unanimously

End of Annual business

B. **PLANNING** – See Separate Agenda

C. JUNE FULL COUNCIL MEETING

1. **Declarations of Interest** – None notified at the meeting

2. Time set aside for Public Participation and External Reports

Peter Cook referred to an article in The Times (June 12 Page 3) referring to Guerrilla Gardeners and specifically to the excellent works performed by 'gardening granny', the late June Turnbull, in the Traffic Island at the junction of the B3098 and the High Street – a really good article worth reading. Peter also congratulated Wessex Water for their speedy response to a leak which was fully repaired within 5 days. Peter finished by thanking the Council members for all that they do,

Nicky Hammond felt that her comments relating to inaccurate financial information provided by Bill Donald at the May meeting considering the financial assistance application from the shop had not been fully reflected in the minutes. Bill Donald subsequently apologised to her for his error.

3. Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 10th May 2023 – to approve

Proposal	Proposer	Seconded	Resolution
To approve and sign the minutes unchanged as a true and accurate record of the meeting.	JR	SB	AGREED with two abstentions due to not being present

4. Action List Status Review and Update Reports from the Minutes of the meeting held on 10th May 2023 – BL had updated the action list and displayed it on screen. Rather than review it at the meeting, it was agreed that he should distribute it to all councillors and seek email updates.

ACTION: FC/47/23 – BL

(Post Meeting Note: Distributed to councillors on 16th June 2023)

5. Finance

a. To receive a Financial Statement and Bank Reconciliation as at 31st May 2023 – BL confirmed that the financial summary and bank reconciliation had been distributed to all councillors prior to the meeting. JR asked whether UPC held accounts which attracted interest. The Business Account attracts a relatively small amount of interest as does the Allotment Reversion account, but with interest rates being particularly low over the last few years the Council has chosen not to invest significant amounts elsewhere. BL agreed to look at options now that interest rates are improving and make a proposal to council.

ACTION: FC/48/23 - BL

Proposal	Proposer	Seconded	Resolution
To ratify all the payments made during May 23 as shown on the Bank Reconciliation and on screen at the meeting.	TH	JR	AGREED unanimously

b. External Audit - Annual Governance Statement for 2022/23 – Statement had been distributed to all councillors prior to the meeting. BL explained that UPC is legally required to approve this statement annually as part of the External Audit submission. He then explained the Governance Statement displayed on screen in more detail.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconded	Resolution
To approve and sign the Governance Statement	TH	PM	AGREED unanimously

c. External Audit - Annual Accounting Statement for 2022/23 – BL reiterated his points made under 5b above, pointing out that the figures more or less mirrored the presentation he gave at the Parish Meeting and the Bank Reconciliation as at 31st March 2023.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconded	Resolution
To approve and sign the Accounting Statement	HG	TH	AGREED unanimously

BL further explained that these two documents formed part of the AGAR Return Form 3 which will also include the Internal Auditors certificate, when he completes his audit by mid-July, supplemented by variance and other analysis / explanations which he is in the process of preparing.

d. Insurance renewal from 1st June 2023 – BL explained that he had recently negotiated a new three year long term agreement commencing 1st June 2023 via Community First at a significantly reduced cost to the prior year (£973.02 instead of £1,162.17). The agreement is

underwritten by Zurich Municipal. PM thanked BL for this work.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconded	Resolution
To ratify the renewal of the UPC Insurance commencing 1st June 2023 via a 3 year LTA.	TH	PM	AGREED unanimously

6. Lead Councillor, Working Groups, Clerk & other written Reports (attached at Appendix I on website version only)

a. Clerks Report – BL confirmed that Martyn Hollyman (MH) had submitted his resignation from the Council with effect immediately after the July meeting. This means that we will have four vacancies at that time although an expression of interest has been received which will hopefully result in a co-option proposal at the July meeting.

b. Councillor written reports

i. Cemetery – TH reported that issues previously raised by Brenda Potter about vehicles going over consecrated ground had now been resolved in consultation with the UPC maintenance contractor and drivers of funeral director vehicles. No changes are necessary to the concrete bollards. However, the marked parking area is suffering from broken marker posts, TH offered to replace these at a cost of around £40.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconded	Resolution
To approve a budget of £40 for new wooden marker posts	TH	PM	AGREED unanimously

Chair closed the meeting for public participation

Brenda Potter commented that the two watering cans by the Bier House are now leaking badly and need to be replaced, PM responded that this will be considered at the July meeting.

Chair re-opened the Council meeting

ii. Footpath adjacent to Fir Tree Cottage – TH explained that he had been approached by at least two residents about the grassed area within the pavement outside Fir Tree Cottage. This is becoming untidy and should be replaced by tarmac. PW suggested that TH should approach WC as this is their property, but it is unlikely that they will do more than give approval for works to be undertaken. This would be such a very low priority job for WC. It was agreed that TH should approach the Highways Engineer in this respect. PM cautioned that UPC should avoid setting a precedent by undertaking or funding such work.

ACTION: FC/49/23 – TH

iii. Urchfont Pond Update – As he is not a councillor, the Urchfont Pond keeper needs to be represented at meetings by a councillor in a lead role. He has, however, submitted an explanation as to why the pond is currently turning red in hot weather – see Appendix 1 to these minutes on website version only. The water no longer contains toxic blue green algae which necessitated use of warning signs.

7. Urchfont Parish Neighbourhood Plan – TH referred to the minutes of the last working group meeting (See Appendix II on website version only) which gives the detail of issues and progress. One issue highlighted was when and if all fact finding / consultation actions need to be presented to the Council for approval prior to action being taken. BL was of the view that as the Authorising Body, Council needs to be approached before any decisions are made which may have implications for the community, this includes final approval of the new plan. He suggested that Working papers and the gathering of public views towards preparation of draft plan documents do not need to come to Council.

TH had distributed the latest version of the intended consultation questionnaire to all councillors, thanking Mandy McDougall for the artwork. It had been decided to hand deliver the questionnaire to all households to ensure receipt and maximise potential response. PM commented that they looked very professional and

comprehensive.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconded	Resolution
To approve the consultation leaflet for distribution to all households.	TH	PM	AGREED unanimously

TH referred to a recent WC briefing paper on the 5 year land supply which indicated that they are currently achieving 4.6 year supply. PW commented that Inspectors are currently overriding rejection of applications despite Wiltshire over supplying year on year, this allows developers to take advantage of the situation to the disadvantage of local plans which are only considered in date for 2 years if the land supply targets are not met.. Wiltshire is now preparing their land supply statement up to 2025, our plan will always be dependent on the WC Plan and national policy.

8. Dogs in Farmers Field – SB acknowledged the total lack of support from the community at the recent Parish Meeting and from comments received elsewhere. As a result she is prepared to consider withdrawing her proposal approved at the 14th December 2022 meeting for dogs to be allowed into the Field between 1st October and 31st March. PM commented that this has been a very emotive issue, having received feedback from the public who they represent, the Council must take a view taking account of the procedure in Standing Orders. BL commented that whatever the outcome of this discussion, an update needs to be posted in the July edition of Redhorn News

Proposal	Proposer	Seconded	Resolution
To rescind the decision to allow dogs to enter Farmers Field for part of the year in accord with Standing Orders Clause 30 – Farmers Field to remain out of bounds for dogs throughout the year.	SB	PM	AGREED unanimously

9. Parish Meeting – PM commented that whilst she had been really nervous in her new role as Chair, she believed that the meeting had been successful. Presentations were very informative and the audience of around 45 were very attentive. It will be nice to try and get representation from younger age groups for the 2024 meeting. TH agreed.

10. Lead Councillor Roles – Having been subject to several resignations / changes over the past year, PM stated that it is necessary to review the lead councillor roles and term of reference. The current listings are on the website with some informal changes having been made subsequently. PM asked councillors to review these roles and let her know what they would like to be nominated for and if any additional roles should be added. These roles require proactive as well as reactive activity throughout the year.

ACTION: FC/50/23 - ALL

11. Proposed bus stop at the end of Crooks Lane – In the absence of SH, PM reported that the new bus flag is now in place, buses will stop on either side of the road. As the current lay-by is currently used by other vehicles, the WC recommendation is that the lay-by should be marked 'Bus Stop'; although parking over the sign by other is not considered illegal. SH has obtained a quote of £950 + VAT to paint the sign and replenish the dotted lay-by lines; further quotes are not necessary.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconded	Resolution
To approve a budget of £950 + VAT to facilitate bus stop road markings by Farmers Field.	TH	PM	AGREED unanimously

12. Location of new Foxley Fields Notice Board – In the absence of SH, PM reported that the Snook family had agreed that the notice board can be positioned on their land down Crooks Lane, they would like to be present when the board is erected. The new board can now be purchased within the budget previously agreed.

ACTION: FC/51/23 - BL

13. Update on Current Issues not covered by above agenda items – In the absence of MH, BL reported that whilst the Electronic Speed Indicator for the B3098 had been ordered and paid for several weeks ago, it has still not been delivered and MH is having difficulty gaining any meaningful update or response from the supplier. As a result the UPC solicitor has now written to the supplier demanding an update and/or refund in a short period of time.

14. External Meetings – None reported

15. Other Reports from Councillors – None reported

16. Items for Future Agenda – not included above – None identified

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.30pm

Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 12th July 2023 - 7.00pm Village Hall (Conference Room)

APPENDIX I TO JUNE 2023 UPC MINUTES

a. CLERK'S REPORT

i. **Finance** – Copies of the Financial Summary and Bank Reconciliation at 31st May 2023 will be distributed to all councillors prior to the meeting. The accounts are in good order.

ii. **Internal & External Audit of 22/23 Accounts and Governance** – prepared documentation will be collected by our internal auditor during week commencing 5th June with the intention of completing his audit by 21st July. In the meantime I will prepare the required supplementary documentation for the External Audit which have to be submitted by 31st July 2023. This will include approved copies of the 22/23 AGAR forms which will be distributed prior to and hopefully approved at the June meeting .

iii. **Councillor Vacancies** – Resulting from the publication of three formal vacancy notices following the retirements of Mark Botham and Malcolm Turner and resignation of Rhodri Scanlon, we have been notified by the WC Returning Officer that no representations from the public were received from the public requesting an election to fill these vacancies. UPC has been given approval to co-opt instead. I have now received a letter of resignation from Martyn Hollyman which will take effect following the July 2023 meeting.

I have received an expression of interest from one individual and have sent her the required nomination forms for completion with the expectation that her co-option could be considered at the July 2023 meeting.

iv. **Insurance 23/24** – I have renewed the Council Insurance through Community First with effect 1st June 2023 on a new three year long term arrangement (LTA) at a reduced cost to the 22/23 premium

Bob Lunn, Clerk to the Council

b. COUNCILLORS WRITTEN REPORTS

i. Grass strip on pavement adjacent to 1 Fir Tree Cottage.

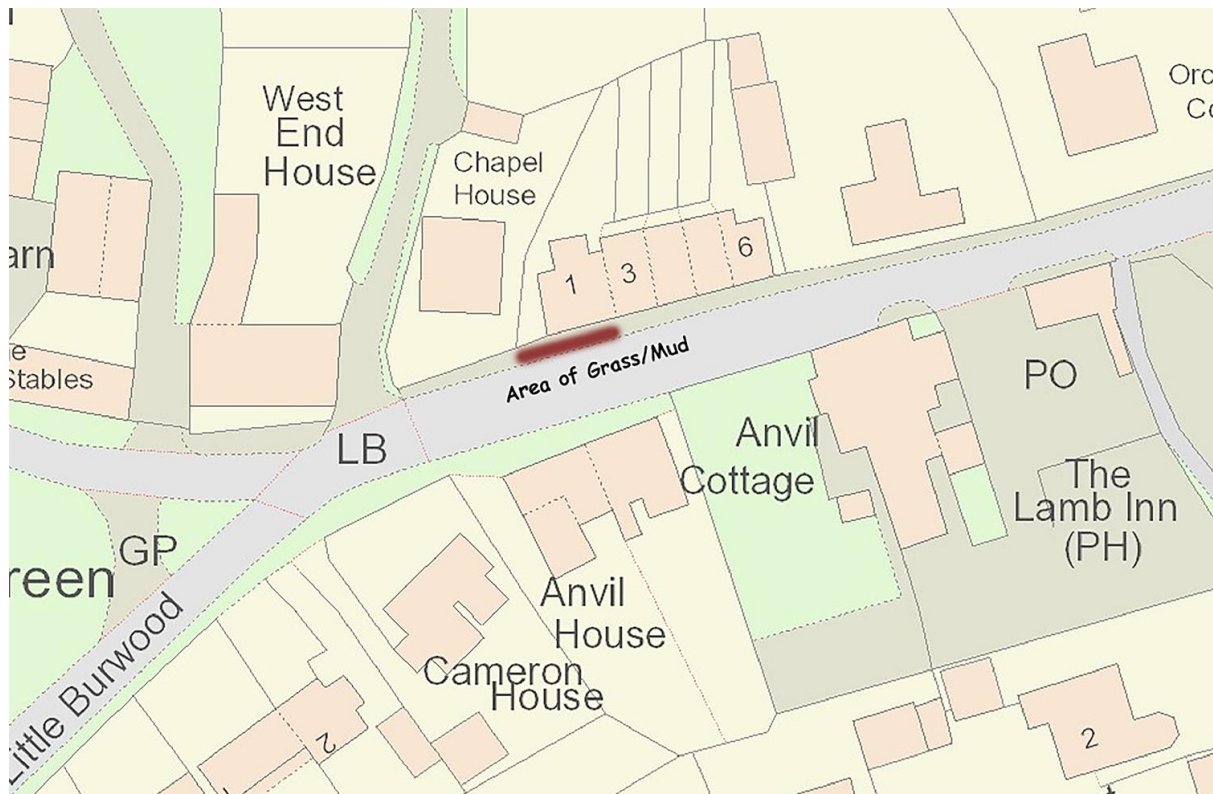
Some years ago, the grassed strip along the pavement adjacent to Fir Tree Cottages (Just West of The Lamb Public House) was removed by Wiltshire Council and replaced by tarmac. Unfortunately, the then owner of 1 Fir Tree Cottage complained and insisted that the small grass strip outside No. 1 should remain. (See attached diagram)

This short narrow strip of grass causes the pavement at this point to narrow which means pedestrians walk upon to the grass which has resulted in it becoming a muddy strip devoid of any grass and slippery during wet weather.

I have received 2 separate requests from residents asking if the Parish Council could arrange for this strip of 'grass' to be tarmacked over, like the rest of the pavement which would remove an unsightly 'muddy' patch and be less hazardous to pedestrians.

I have been assured that all local residents fully support this suggestion.

I therefore ask UPC to consider approaching WC to request the removal of the grassed strip and replace it with tarmac to match the rest of the pavement.



ii. Cemetery

Councillors will remember that at the April UPC meeting Mrs Brenda Potter raised 2 concerns relating to Urchfont Cemetery:

1. Vehicles driving over the grassed area adjacent to the cremation memorial plaques which she feared could damage this consecrated ground.
2. The many broken marker posts, some lying on the ground which designate the funeral Hearse turning area were unsightly and should be replaced.

Regarding 1. Above - Since the UPC meeting I have been in contact with Mrs Potter and she is satisfied, following her own enquiries, that it was the maintenance contractor vehicles that had caused the problem during wet weather. She is satisfied that this was not due to other car users.

I have, however, spoken to a Funeral Director and one of their drivers and can confirm that the current turning area is adequate for their purposes and, in their opinion does not need extending.

Regarding 2. Above – There are 16 short posts marking the turning area, most are broken due to their age and rotten at the base. The cost of each post is £2.50 (£2.50 x 16 = £40 including VAT). I therefore ask UPC to fund 16 new posts and if agreed I am happy to carry out the work to replace them.

Trevor Hill
Councillor

iii. **Urchfont Pond Update**

The surface waters of the pond are currently coloured red due to a bloom of the unicellular alga *Eugena sanguinea*. This alga contains a high level of the red pigment astaxanthin.

These algae are able to move by means of a flagellum – a thin whip-like organ at the rear of the cell which propels it through the water. When large numbers of cells are present their flagella get tangled up – hence the clumps of floating red scum.

The bloom is brought on by bright sunlight and a ready supply of essential nutrients containing nitrogen and phosphorous sources. The sun has been shining since the 20th May and our population of resident and itinerant ducks provide the nutrients.

Although most unsightly, this is a temporary phenomenon and is harmless to wildlife (and pets should they consume pond water). The pigment astaxanthin is used as a natural red colouring agent in the food industry.

As regards a strategy for dealing with this bloom, the short answer is to wait for it to die out. How long this takes will depend on the amount of sunshine we get over the summer. As a bloom of *E. sanguinea* happened last year, we know for certain that it *will* go away.

The long answer is one that attempts to answer this question: what can we do to reduce overall algal numbers in the pond so that it becomes clearer. My answer to this is to wait for a population of zooplankton to develop (like rotifers and water fleas) which will feed on the algae and restore an ecological balance to the pond.

Eric Ahlquist
Urchfont Pond Keeper

APPENDIX II TO June 23 UPC MINUTES

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE NP WORKING GROUP ON 30 MAY 23 IN URCHFONTS VILLAGE HALL

Present: Debbie Carr-Jones (DCJ) Trevor Hill (TH); Simon Holt (SH); Linda Jennings (LJ); Dave Mottram (DM)

Apologies: Stuart Davies (SD); Rob Dolan (RD); Ken Mortimer (KM); Sally Stephens (SS)

1. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the last meeting held on 25 Apr 23 had been approved by the WG and passed to UPC.

Re item 3: TH confirmed that the presentation had been made at the public Parish meeting on 20 May 23.

Re Item 5: See discussion at Item 2 below. It was agreed that 600 copies of the questionnaire would be printed.

All to Note.

2. Questionnaire

Amendments

The questionnaire had been amended by SH, LJ and DM in accordance with the minutes of the previous meeting and with further changes. The revised document had been sent to all WG members and SS had submitted 4 recommendations for change.

Decisions:

- Page 2, first para, under “How will this plan be developed?” remove the word “to” before “improved”
- Page 2, second para, add hyphen between DCJ surnames
- Page 3, Q1, examples, delete “views across the countryside and in and out of the villages” add “and views”
- Page 4, original Q4 “Do you foresee potential changes which could be detrimental” reinstated
- Page 4, Q4, now Q5 – wording to remain as before.

Action: LJ would make the agreed amendments as soon as possible and pass to SH

Production and distribution

SH confirmed there was a graphic designer in the village who should be able to make a professional job of designing the questionnaire. It was considered that the questionnaire should be publicised in the Redhorn News before delivery. There was discussion about the method of questionnaire delivery to households - possibly inserting copies in the Redhorn News or having members delivering around the Parish.

Decisions:

- Mandy, the graphic designer in the village, should be contacted to see if she were able to undertake the questionnaire design
- This first questionnaire in the NP should be publicised in the Redhorn News
- WG members would hand deliver the questionnaires around the Parish
- The Parish area would be split between members for household delivery

Actions:

- SH would contact Mandy the graphic designer to confirm if she could take on the questionnaire design and if so, submit any draft designs to the WG, if possible, before the next WG meeting
- SH would produce an article on the questionnaire for the next July edition of the Redhorn News
- LJ would provide local maps of Urchfont and Wedhampton to enable a fair split of household numbers for deliveries by WG members
- All to note the delivery of questionnaires

3. Affordable housing

There was considerable discussion centred around the number of affordable homes which should be identified for the UPNP. The outcome of the recent Housing Needs Survey (HNA), based on 117 questionnaire replies, identified a need for 8 homes. It was agreed that this was likely a conservative

figure given the limited response to the questionnaire and lack of available low cost housing in the Parish. The issue of adding the number of homes outstanding from the previous HNA and UWLNP was considered. SD had submitted comments on the subject; his view was that the aim should be to maximise the numbers of affordable housing and going forward, include the number not delivered under the UWLNP. SH reported that the WC representative's view was that the figure of 8 from the latest Survey should be sought.

It was agreed that the technical term "Affordable Housing" was rather a misnomer as the cost of "affordable" homes and "affordable" rents were still beyond most local people on an average wage. It was felt that there was a clear distinction between "Affordable Housing" and "low cost" housing - the latter being a more realistic description of local need.

Decision: The subject required further consideration, but as there was no clear direction on the number of houses to be built in the Parish, it was agreed to revisit the subject at a later stage.

Action: All to note

4. Plan Objectives

TH felt that the objectives in the existing UWLNP should be publicised to seek the views of residents on their relevance. LJ added that the latest draft questionnaire would also draw out objectives.

Decisions: The original 7 objectives in the UWLNP and any new objectives would be set out for consideration by residents in a second questionnaire.

Action: All to note

5. UWLNP policies

LJ suggested that the WG needed to consider the policies of the UWLNP which could be taken forward into the UPNP. It was agreed that this task should be undertaken at a later stage once the UPNP objectives were clear.

All to note

6. Transfer of UPC Funding

SH suggested that the UPC fund allocated to the WG for the neighbourhood plan process could be transferred to the Parish Trust, to ease the work burden of the Parish Clerk. However, it was felt that the number of financial transactions would be small and as UPC were the 'qualifying body', there was little to be gained with a transfer.

Decision: The NP fund allocated by UPC would stay under UPC control

Action: All to note

7. Rental Properties and Air BnBs

The issue of holiday homes, Air BnBs and rental properties generally was introduced by SH with the suggestion that perhaps residents should consider the issue. Whilst accepting that it was not possible to challenge use of homes, it was agreed that this would be interesting topic for residents to discuss. WG members had no accurate information on numbers of rental properties, holiday homes and Air BnB's, so it was difficult to understand the scale of the issue.

Decisions:

- The opinions of local residents regarding of holiday homes, Air BnBs and rental properties could be sought via a future questionnaire
- Further research needed to be undertaken by WG members
- The subject would be put on the Agenda for the next WG meeting

Action: All to note

8. Wessex Water Grants

SH reported that Wessex Water had grants available for local projects and research for neighbourhood plans might qualify.

Decision: The WG considered it was worthwhile to seek funding for UPNP preparation/production.

Action: DM would contact Wessex Water with a view to seeking a grant.

9. Locality Funding

DM reported that he had investigated funding opportunities via the Locality website and had joined its membership network as a representative of the WG. This could put the Group in a favourable position

In the queue for a grant, so DM would monitor the website.

All to note

10. Any Other Business

Rural Exception Sites

SH explained the concept of Rural Exception sites – ie - those outside the development boundary which provide only affordable homes. He explained that it was difficult to get permission from landowners to develop as the land needed to be purchased at a minimal price. It was agreed that any further discussion should shelved until SD was available to give his views on the subject.

All to note

Oversight of UPC

SH stated that it was possible that delays to the Plan process could occur if every publicity article had to have the approval of UPC.

Decision: The extent of UPC oversight should be discussed and reviewed with councillors.

Action: TH would address the issue of UPC oversight of publicity articles at the next Parish Council meeting on 14 Jun 23.

11. Next Meeting

The next meeting would be held on 27 Jun 23 in the Village Hall commencing 7.30pm.

Action: All to note.