



DRAFT Minutes of the Full Urchfont Parish Council (UPC) Meeting held in Urchfont Village Hall on Wednesday 9th October 2024

Present: Councillor's: Moscrop (PM – Chair), Bamber (SB – Vice Chair), Rotherford (JR), Hill (TH), Waddell (JW), Shears (SS) and Stephens (AS)

Councillor for Urchfont & Bishops Cannings: Philip Whitehead (PW)

Clerk to the Council: Lunn (BL)

Members of the Public (for all or part of the meeting): Sally Stephens, Malcolm Smith, Graham Houlden, Richard Hawkins, Jill & John Durbin, Clare and Phil Milanese, Linda Jennings, John Beaty-Pownall, Alasdair Gordan, Tracey Lloyd, Lisa Gordon

A. INTRODUCTION

- 1. Welcome by the Chair** – PM welcomed councillors and members of the public to the meeting
- 2. Apologies:** Cllrs Harding (RH) and Kendall (PK)
- 3. Proposal:** In view of the confidential / personal nature of business to be discussed at Agenda Item 20, it is considered in the public interest to exclude members of the press and public (except current members of the NP Working Group) from the meeting and that they be instructed to leave before that item commences.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
This proposal to be agreed.	PM	SB	AGREED unanimously

B. PLANNING – See Separate Minutes

C. OCTOBER FULL COUNCIL MEETING

1. Councillor Declarations of Interest: TH, JW, AS declared a conflict of Interest in Item 20 and declared that they would leave the room during Council discussion and voting on this item.

2. Time set aside for Public Participation and External Reports

a. Malcolm Smith made the point that he had sat in the same chair some six years ago and made comments about not being in favour of secret Council discussions such as Item 20 below. Legislation stipulates that all Council meetings should be open to the public. He had looked back over past minutes and found a quote by the current chair 'no point in looking back, must look to the future'. His view is that if you don't look back then you do not correct mistakes such as those made by the previous NP WG. He is astonished that the Council has now taken the decision to hold a discussion on the NP in secret, will they never learn.

PM responded that the agreed closed session is nothing whatsoever to do with the NP itself or the work being undertaken by the WG to devise a new document, it is about an alleged breach of the Code of Conduct by a member of the group which the Council needs to consider.

b. John and Gill Durbin, who live in Townsend Cottages, spoke on the difficulties they and their neighbours experience when trying to drive out of their properties due to speed of traffic on the B3089 and inconsiderate drivers. In addition Gill had nearly been knocked down by a speeding driver when she tried to cross the road, the driver did not even slow down. BL had advised contacting WC Highways on an earlier occasion, they advised installation of a mirror on the opposite side of the road. This was installed but disappeared after a couple of days, who took it is not known. It is understood that PW has made some suggestions to improve the situation by changing the layout of the road to provide better visibility. As this will probably involve a proposal to LHFIG,

PM suggested that this should be included in the November agenda for an update from PW and consideration of any UPC involvement.

3. Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 11th September 2024

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
To approve and sign the minutes unchanged as a true and accurate record of the meeting	PM	JW	AGREED

4. **Outstanding Action List Status Review and Update Reports from the Minutes of the meeting held on 11th September 2024** – BL displayed the action list as at 3rd October which had also been distributed to councillors prior to the meeting. Action 57 was reported as complete by PM, actions 31, 52, 59 and 60 will be updated under agenda items below.

5. Finance

i. **Financial Statement and Bank Reconciliation as at 30th September 2024** – BL confirmed that he had distributed these documents to all councillors prior to the meeting. The second and final instalment of the PRECEPT had been received from WC. BL commented that he accounts are in good order, no other comments or questions were asked.

ii. **Financial Spend Items during September 2024** – BL displayed the spend detail during December, this had been included in the previously distributed bank reconciliation.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
To approve the spend details for September 2024	PM	TH	AGREED unanimously

iii. **Proposal to renew Standpipe contract (£1362 per annum to Oct 2025)** – BL explained that Eric Ahlquist (designated pond maintainer) had recommended renewal. PM emphasized the importance of the Pond to the Village and JR commented that this should be renewed as the previously proposed bore-hole had been shelved due to expense and practical issues. BL confirmed that this cost is already largely budgeted for in Running Costs

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
To approve the renewal of this annual contract which includes the standpipe and water charges	PM	JR	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 the external auditors had completed their audit without comment or observation. PM thanked BL for all his hard work and time to prepare documents for the audit. BL also confirmed that the Community Asset application in respect to the Garage site had been submitted to WC.

b. Councillor reports

Update on Speed Indicator – See agenda Item 8 below

Update on Urchfont Pond – Nothing to add or clarify

First Responders – JR reported that this is progressing well with hopefully four being fully qualified by January 2025. He is hoping to gather statistics on call out activity shortly.

Highways Report – AS commented that unusually he is not receiving responses from the WC Highways

Engineer, he will chase again. TH noted that the reported 'puddle' on Top Green has been given to the Parish Steward for resolution.

7. Urchfont Parish Neighbourhood Plan (See latest WG minutes at Appendix II on website version only) – In addition to the written report, TH reported that Rob Dolan is stepping down from the WG due to increasing work commitments. This brings the group down to 8 members. On questionnaires, TH reported that 555 had been distributed to households and 199 had been returned, considered to be a reasonable response. These will now be analysed and along with other matters will be presented at a public consultation meeting to be held on 9th November 2024. Referring to earlier comments by Malcolm Smith, PM emphasized that a significant amount of due diligence activity is being undertaken by the WG who want to get the new NP right.

8. Speed Indicator Sign on B3098 – TH reported that Richard Harris had identified major issues with internal components such that the machine is incapable of functioning. Unfortunately the supplier has gone bust and attempts to contact them have failed. TH recommended that we should proceed to purchase new indicator(s), he agreed to review potential suppliers / offers. JR stressed the importance of due diligence prior to purchase, especially in view of history. JW also proposed that the existing speed indicator should be removed. PM agreed that this situation had arisen through no fault of the Council. TH to make specific proposals at the next meeting.

ACTION: FC/24/61 - TH

9. Pathway to Oakfrith Wood and reported dog attack – BL stated that written proposals received from Mr. Milanese had been distributed to all councillors prior to the meeting. PM commented that whilst the Council had previously objected to the works, but the latest proposals appear better. It was noted that there are a lot of footpaths in the area, they all get muddy in winter and people generally wear appropriate footwear when walking. TH had reservations about using wood chippings / planings near the Will Corke yard which previously blocked drains in the area. PW clarified that the road planings had not caused the issue, it was a blockage in the under path drain. JW likes to walk her dog along the path and would welcome improvement, JR agreed that something should be done about the path even though it might increase footfall into the Wood itself. SB pointed out that there is an alternative entrance to the Wood, if we are to consider improvements to the pathway maybe it should be on a trial basis.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
To implement a trial area on the path over the coming winter to prove the effectiveness of the proposed materials. Trial area to be agreed by PM and JR following a visit to the path with Mr Milanese.	PM	JW	AGREED unanimously

ACTION: FC/24/62 – PM/JR

PM referred to the report received from a member of the public whose dog had been attacked on the Pathway to Oakfrith Wood by another dog which has a reputation in the Village for such action. BL had advised a report to the dog warden as UPC has no enforcement powers. PW, who knows both dogs, believed that this was a dog fight not attack. Any male dog will by nature attack another dog if neither have been neutered. This is more about the need for owners to understand likely dog behaviour on or off the lead. JR agreed, but SB still had concerns about a large dog attacking a small dog in a public place. AS suggested that it might be appropriate to put something in the Redhorn about owners responsibility to keep control of dogs in a public space.

ACTION: FC/24/63 - PK

10. Loud Music Noise and damage to Shelter in the Playing Field / Recreation Ground – PW confirmed that he is not so concerned about noise in the shelter, but nearer the residential areas. He accepted that most kids are well behaved, he thinks it is just the few in the 12 to 16 year old group are the issue, SB pointed out that a couple of letters have been received from neighbouring properties expressing the view that they are not bothered by this activity. SB expressed the view that she is more concerned over apparent vandalism of the shelter and broken bottles being left on the ground, arrangements are being made for the shelter to be repaired again. TH commented that we are fortunate in the small amount of vandalism experienced, it could be much worse and is probably seasonal. PM concluded by asking Council members to

the situation in coming months, further consideration will be given if the situation becomes worse.

11. Best Kept Village Winner Presentations – PM commented that the event was very successful and is well publicised in the current Redhorn magazine. She thanked in particular SB and other helpers on the day, with a special thanks to Cecilia Gillington for the delicious cakes. The following locations for the plaques were agreed;

CPRE Winner of Winners – Old Post Office (TH)

Idverde plaque – Community Shop (SB)

Certificate – to be displayed in the Village Hall (BL)

TH proposed that the tree should be planted in a suitable location on Paddock Green, the local residents have indicated that they are happy with this location. This location was agreed.

(Post meeting Note: planting in this location has been undertaken by TH.)

12. New Notice Boards – In relation to the proposed community notice board at the Shop, BL reported that he had belatedly gained information from WC planning and had given his interpretation of the advice for display of adverts / notices on non-Parish owned land to SB. This together with a recommendation that the Shop Committee, as manager / controller of the board, need to satisfy themselves that they will meet complex guidelines for notices not requiring prior or deemed approval. Planning approval is not required for the display board itself, but approval may be needed for some notices dependent on the type. SB confirmed that this advice had been passed to the Shop.

JW then asked about the proposed notice board for Foxley Fields. BL explained that as Parish Council notices are covered by different rules, we need to get written approval of the land owner to erect a board on his land as agreed. In addition funding proposals should be made at the November meeting for a board and post capable of displaying up to eight A4 pages. JW asked whether non-Parish Council notices can be displayed in this board, BL responded that they cannot. PM explained that if the residents want a community notice board then that will have to comply with the same regulations as that at the shop, they can apply for funding via the UPC Financial Assistance policy.

ACTION: FC/24/64 – JW

BL confirmed that Peter Cook has kindly agreed to refurbish the Council notice boards at the Community Shop and at the Garage.

13. Daffodil Planting project – PM reported that planting is scheduled in Urchfont for this coming weekend (12th/13th) and that she was pleased that volunteers have come forward from Wedhampton and Lydeaway to assist when bulbs arrive, likely to be November.

14. Advance notification of councillor absence from Scheduled Council meetings – BL confirmed that meeting dates up to December 2025 have been published to councillors and are on the UPC website. PM explained that BL now needed to be made aware of any absences from council meetings well in advance (e.g. when and where holidays or other absences are known well in advance). This is to potentially warn if and when meeting quorum are likely to be at risk as was the case in September 2024.

15. Devizes Gateway Station – PM referred to emails from Mr. Holt suggesting that the Council should write to appropriate authorities to try to keep this project active, however, the project has been put on hold and UPC is not in apposition to influence this at this stage. PW stated that he is awaiting a report on this decision and will forward a copy when received. There is no budget and although the Gateway could be reconsidered, this will take several years to address. PW agreed that there is nothing that the PC can do at this stage to influence progress.

16. Update on Current Issues not covered by above agenda items – TH displayed the finished display board to be fixed in the bus shelter. TH considered the finished board produced by John Kay free of charge to be excellent, this was echoed by all present. The board will shortly be installed in the bus shelter following a final coat of paint. It is hoped to get the young authors to view their work shortly and to report this in the next edition of Redhorn News.

17. External Meetings – Nothing to report

18. Other Reports from Councillors – None reported

19. Items for Future Agenda (not identified from agenda items above) – None identified

20. NP Working Group, alleged Code of Conduct issues – No notes recorded for publication in view of the confidential / personal nature of the discussion – see item A3 above.

As required, members of the public (apart from NP WG members) and Cllr Whitehead left the room prior to discussion.

There being no further business following completion of Item 20, the meeting closed at 9.30pm

Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 13th November 2024 - 7.00pm Village Hall (Conference Room).

APPENDIX I TO OCTOBER 2024 UPC MEETING

A. CLERK'S REPORT

- i. **Finance** – Copies of the Financial Summary and Bank Reconciliation on 31st July 2024 will be distributed to all councillors prior to the meeting. The accounts are in good order.
- ii. **External Audit** – PKF Littlejohn have notified successful completion of their audit of our 2023/24 Governance and Accounts without observation or comment.
- iii. **Councillor Status** – UPC currently have **TWO** vacancies. It is understood that two potential candidates may be nominated before the end of the year, one at the end of October.
- iv. **Application for Community Asset Registration for Urchfont Garage site** – the completed application was submitted to WC on 15th September 2024 and receipt acknowledged. I understand that the application has been sent to the owner, the local Unitary Member and the Community Engagement Manager for comment with a requested response 14th October 2024.

Bob Lunn, Clerk to the Council

B. COUNCILLORS WRITTEN REPORTS

Update on Speed Indicator Sign.

Richard Harris has examined the Speed Indicator Sign. He has replaced all fuses and replace the control panel located in the main control unit. Although he is happy that the solar panels are working correctly and delivering solar power to back up the main battery the control unit does not appear to send a signal to operate the sign panel. His only conclusion is that the one or both units are defective or incompatible. He does not seek payment for his time or expenses.

As previously reported, the Fordingbridge Company which supplied the SID unit are no longer in business.

Having spent several hours trying to resolve the faults in this equipment, I believe UPC should now consider other options to replace this sign.

Cllr Trevor Hill

Update on Urchfont Pond

The strategy of keeping a high calcium level in the pond water is still showing benefits. The pond is still dominated by the filamentous cyanobacterium *Planktothrix aghardii*, but the numbers are significantly lower than they were in 2023. This time last year there were 150,000 *Planktothrix* cells per millilitre, but this year we have only 12,000 cells per millilitre.

The water is still cloudy because these cells are very long compared to other algae which we have in the pond, so they have a bigger effect on water clarity.

There is evidence that our *Planktothrix* is not in the best of health and the most obvious one is water colour. In conditions of nutritional limitation, in this case insufficient soluble phosphates due to the calcium, it produces carotenoid pigments of the sort you see in autumn leaves. The result is that the pond looks brown-green rather than the blue-green colour we had last year. I'm hoping that *Planktothrix* will start dying off – but I can't promise anything.

Eric Ahlquist

First responders

Helen Boyd has been accepted as a new first responder, so we now have three for the area and a further candidate is considering apply in December /January. We are still waiting the delivery of the equipment although there is one set already in the Parish.

Cllr John Rotherford

Highways Report

The last month was a quiet month on the highways front. We have requested a meeting with the Wiltshire Council highways engineer for our area, to review where we are with outstanding requests for tasks to be performed and discuss ongoing issues within the parish.

Following a delivery van getting stuck on the school lane footpath. The incident was reported to the highways engineer to inspect for any repairs that may be required on the vehicle owner's insurance.

Parish Steward

Matt our parish Steward spent his day in the parish treating weeds growing through the pathways around the village.

If you have any highways issues, please to report them on the "My Wilts" app. Or visit the Wiltshire council website.

Cllrs Andy Stephens and Trevor Hill.

APPENDIX II TO OCTOBER 2024 UPC AGENDA

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE NP WORKING GROUP ON 24 SEP 24 IN URCHFONT VILLAGE HALL

Present: Trevor Hill (TH); Keith Hills (KH); Linda Jennings (LJ); Dave Mottram (DM); Sally Stephens (SS) (Chair); Malcolm Turner (MT) Jackie Waddell (JW).

In attendance: Cllr Philip Whitehead, (PW) (Wiltshire Council) and resident. Left after Item 1.

Apologies: Stuart Davies (SD) Rob Dolan (RD)

The NP WG had received a note from RD announcing his decision to step down as a member of the Group.

The NP WG wish to record their thanks for his obvious contribution and wish him the very best for himself and his family.

1. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN IN REGARD TO URCHFONT GARAGE

PW had sent a note to members of WG regarding the Planning application for the Urchfont Vehicles site.

He outlined the latest position with the application and noted the conflict in the UWLNP between its inclusion as a housing site and its status as an employment site. He considered that there was a

flaw in the UWLNP site selection process and that the garage should not have been selected as a housing site.

The WG agreed that local circumstances had changed since the production of the UWLNP and the garage was now a viable business which provided a core service to the village. SS had compiled the draft Working Environment section of emerging UPNP and confirmed its significant service/employment status. PW reported a large number of local objections to the garage development application.

PW proposed that there had been a material change in the garage operation since the making of the UWLNP and argued the application should be assessed in light of current circumstances. He considered that UWLNP Policy LB1, part c) was no longer applicable and that the application decision should be judged against parts a) and b) only and Wiltshire Council Core Strategy Policy 35.

Decisions:

- The WG agreed to send a statement to UPC to reflect a material change of circumstances in the garage operation and support for its retention
- WG members would reinforce the value of the garage by supporting the UPC proposal to identify it to Wiltshire Council as a Community Asset

Actions:

- KH would produce a draft statement for circulation to the WG for comment
- TH/JW would send the agreed statement to UPC for consideration and onward transmission to Wiltshire Council to the officer responsible for the garage planning application.
- WG members could write in to Wiltshire Council to confirm their support for the garage as a Community Asset.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the last meeting held on 27 Aug 24 had been passed to UPC and approved.

Matters Arising

- 2nd Questionnaire - see Item 4 below
- Call for Sites update - see Item 5 below

3. CODE OF CONDUCT

JW had send an e-mail to all WG members, copied to the UPC Chair and Clerk, reporting on an alleged breach of the Code of Conduct. She briefly outlined its content and asked members to decide and advise if a breach had taken place. The further discussion is confidential and not minuted.

Action: All WG members

4. 2ND QUESTIONNAIRE

SS reported that 555 flyers and questionnaires had been delivered to every occupied household in the Parish and that spare copies had been placed in the Urchfont village shop. Returned questionnaires were placed in envelopes to ensure confidentiality. MT confirmed that the costs of

production of the document had been recovered. DM confirmed that he had completed the spreadsheet to record the questionnaire responses.

TH reported that so far, he had collected and entered 61 responses. In the light of RDs departure from the WG, LJ offered to pick up completed questionnaires from the shop towards the end of opening hours.

Decisions:

- The details from the completed questionnaires would be recorded by TH and LJ then transferred to a master spreadsheet compiled by DM with the questionnaire number used as the only method of identifying those completing the document
- A reasoned response would be sent to 2 members of the public who had criticised the questionnaires to address their concerns
- The collection of the questionnaires from the shop would continue until the deadline, 30 Sep

Actions:

- DM would transfer the questionnaire response details onto a master spreadsheet
- TH and LJ would continue to pick completed questionnaires from the shop and from the Lydeaway and Wedhampton councillors drop-off points volunteers and record responses.

5. CALL FOR SITES

LJ reported that she had received sites for housing development from 7 landowners and passed round a schedule showing the details. Further submissions were expected and would be added later.

Action: LJ would continue to log and map the details of submitted development sites.

6. MATRIX SCORING AND PROGRESS

DM reported that he and KH had spent some time refining the site assessment matrix, which required further consideration on the weighting of criteria.

Decision and Action: LJ would liaise with DM and KH to fix a meeting to discuss the site assessment matrix.

7. PLANNING FOR 9 NOV PUBLIC MEETING

SS felt that it was prudent to discuss arrangements and content for the forthcoming public meeting on 9 Nov. It was agreed that the focus should be on housing and specifically the results of the comments on the questionnaire.

Various suggestions were made regarding the need to display a summary of the questionnaire analysis. It was agreed that there needed to be a means of drawing attention to the public event. SS confirmed she would be putting another ad about the event in the Redhorn News.

Decisions:

- A meeting in the near future would be necessary to discuss the outcomes from the questionnaire and how they should be reported and displayed; 3 Oct was agreed as the best date.
- To save costs, prominent banners could be placed across the existing publicity posters

Actions:

- TH would book the village hall conference room for 7pm on 3 Oct
- All WG members would make every effort to attend the special meeting on 3 Oct

- SS would liaise with the graphic designer in the village regarding a prominent banner for the existing posters

8. ATTENDANCE OF WILTSHIRE PLANNING CONTACT AT FUTURE MEETINGS

The WG felt it would be beneficial to have a professional contact in Wiltshire Council to advise on any NP queries. LJ reported that one of the planning team would be prepared to have a zoom meeting. TH thought that there was a liaison team under Michael Kilmister who should be available to give guidance.

Decision: The possibility of having a professional adviser from Wiltshire Council should be followed up

Action: LJ would contact Michael Kilmister to seek the appointment of a plan liaison officer for the UPNP.

9. RESPONSES TO RECENT EMAILS

SS reported that the WG had received 2 emails criticising the design and content of the questionnaire and confirmed that she had sent a holding reply to both. The market research professional, Liz Turner (LT), had made some explanatory comments to the WG highlighting its approval by UPC, the use of low cost eco- friendly pulp for the questionnaire production and the economy of one questionnaire per household.

Decision: A explanation and reasoned response would be sent to those making critical comments

Action: DM and KH would draft responses to both parties concerned, to be agreed by all WG members before sending.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

MT asked about the amount of budget still available from the UPC grant. TH thought that about £300 of the £1000 had been spent so far and added that it was possible that a further grant might be available from UPC. It was possible that further funding might be available from Locality and it was agreed that the organisation should be approached now that its funding position might be resolved.

Decision and Action: LJ would contact Locality to establish the funding situation for NPs.

11. NEXT MEETING

The next monthly WG meeting would be held on 22 Oct 24 in the Village Hall commencing 7.00pm with TH as Chair.

All to note