



## **DRAFT Minutes of the Urchfont Parish Council (UPC) Full Council Meeting held in Urchfont Village Hall on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2022**

**Present:** Councillors: Hollyman (MH – Vice Chairman), Turner (MT), Moscrop (PM), Stevens (DS), Bamber (SB), Gibb (HG), Rotherham (PR) and Rotherford (JR)

**Clerk to the Council:** Lunn (BL)

**Councillor for Urchfont & Bishops Cannings:** Cllr Whitehead (PW)

**Members of the Public (for all or part of the meeting):** Mr. P Bancroft, Mrs C Cannon

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

**1. Welcome by the Vice Chairman** – MH welcomed all councillors and members of the public to the meeting.

**2. Apologies:** Cllrs. Botham (MB) and Holt (SH)

**3. Application for co-option** – BL explained that the expected application had not been received.

**B. PLANNING** – See Separate Minutes

### **C. JANUARY COUNCIL MEETING**

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

#### **2. Time set aside for Public Participation and External Reports**

**i. Queens Platinum Jubilee Celebrations** -Mr. Bancroft referred to the nationwide Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations being planned this year, largely taking place over the extended bank holiday weekend 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> June 2022. Although he had organised celebrations in the Parish for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, he is unable to do anything this year. He suggested that there is a need to organise:

- Big Jubilee Lunch, picnic, hog roast or street parties on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> June – the Village Hall has already been tentatively booked and he and Elaine are happy for their paddock to be used.
- Beacon & fireworks on Urchfont Hill to join other beacons across the country – PR offered to assist building a beacon
- Possibly a commemorative tree to be planted
- Other events

Mr. Bancroft encouraged the Council to:

- actively support and encourage participation in events
- appoint an organising lead and team
- fund the celebrations, the Parish Trust may be able to assist

To give councillors some idea of likely costs and in response to a question from BL, Mr. Bancroft agreed to forward details of the spend on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations.

Mrs Cannon, chairman of the Parish Trust, confirmed that the Trust does have some scope to fund say £500 to £1000, but the Trust does not want to be involved in the organisation of the celebrations.

MH stated that he is confident that UPC will support this initiative, the proposed involvement and funding will be discussed and agreed further at the February meeting. Councillors to consider their possible involvement and role to discuss in February. He commented that significant tree planting proposals are already being considered by UPEG and of course that the prevailing COVID situation in June will need to be taken into account.

**ACTION: FC/01/22 - ALL**

### 3. Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2021

Proposal	Proposer	Secunder	Resolution
To approve and sign the minutes unchanged as a true and accurate record of the meeting	MH	MT	AGREED with 3 abstentions due to absence from previous meeting

4. **Action List Status Review and Update Reports from the Minutes of the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2021** not covered as separate agenda items below - BL had distributed the latest outstanding action listing to all councillors prior to the meeting and called for any updates.

- Specify verge works for budget approval – MH noted that a quote is still awaited from WC
- Pursue resolution of milestone damage – PW requested BL to resend previous emails on this subject so that he can pursue within WC

**ACTION: FC/02/22 - BL**

- Restart discussion of Wedhampton to Planks footpath – PM reported that she is still seeking a response from Nick Plank
- Consult Wedhampton residents on introduction of 20mph speed limit – PM reported that her survey indicated that at least 35% of residents are in favour of 20mph limit. PW confirmed that a case will need to be made to CATG for funding, but that if approved UPC will be asked to contribute 25%.
- FOFF tree works, ensure compliant with Forestry Commission licence – PR had tried to contact Commission for advice but no response to date, but as felled trees are all suffering from ash dieback he did not believe there is an issue.

### 5. Finance

a. **To receive a Financial Statement and Bank Reconciliation as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021** – BL confirmed that he had distributed these documents to all councillors prior to the meeting and referred them to his written report for comments (see Appendix on website only). No comments or questions were raised by councillors.

b. **PRECEPT 2022/23** – BL confirmed that he had distributed an updated indicative budget as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021 to all councillors prior to the meeting based on a 2% increase in PRECEPT for 22/23. MH commented that inflation is currently standing at 4%+ and wondered whether a 3% increase in PRECEPT would be more appropriate. This would increase Band D property council tax by only £2.83 per annum but give some protection against inflated prices. DS considered that a bigger increase could probably be justified to the community, but recognised the need to minimise increased household costs. It was also noted that higher percentage increases in PRECEPT does not translate into significantly increased funds available.

Proposal	Proposer	Secunder	Resolution
To submit a claim to WC for a 3% increase in PRECEPT (£53,562.02) for FY22/23. BL to submit claim by the WC deadline.	MH	SB	AGREED unanimously

**ACTION: FC/03/22 – BL**

(Post Meeting Note: PRECEPT requirement submitted to WC by email on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2022)

c. **Any new proposals for project or other funding in 2021/22** – SB noted that the Village Plan notice boards are looking a bit tired and in need of repair. PM commented that she had been looking at a similar issue in Wedhampton and had received a quote for a new display board of around £380. SB in consultation with PM to make a proposal for replacement of these boards (not plans) at the next meeting, including the possibility of linking the purchases for Urchfont and Wedhampton.

**ACTION: FC/04/22 – SB/PM**

6. **Lead Councillor, Working Groups, Clerk & other written Reports (attached at Appendix I on website only)** – to consider any issues arising or clarification required (if none then quickly move on to next agenda item)

a. **Clerks Report** – BL emphasized the change in the May and October meeting dates, but had nothing further

to add to his report.

**b. Councillor reports**

**i. UPC Highways Report** – MH added that he and MB had virtually completed their 6 monthly survey which will then be discussed with the new WC Highways Engineer. He also noted that overhanging cables in Friars Lane had been quickly removed by Openreach, and also that he had met the Parish Steward clearing the drain in the same location. Clearance of mud on the adjacent road could not be completed due to parked cars.

**ii. Proposed Devizes Gateway Station** – in the absence of SH, no further update was given.

**7. Environmental Group Proposals** – MT commented that MB, SH, Lisa Kinnaird and Peter Newell are in the process of finalizing and agreeing a proposed action plan following the presentations made at the event on 20<sup>th</sup> November. PW reiterated the fact that any planting proposals will need landowner permission, including WC.

**8. ROSPA Inspection report on Children’s Play Area** – SB reported that she had made a further visit to the playground with DS and PR to review the report comments. The shelter is probably the most in need of repair, SB subsequently contacted a roofing contractor about repair of the roof in particular. SB had also contacted the Head Teacher at the School; to point out comments about the football goal posts which are part of her responsibility rather than UPC. Some playground equipment does not necessarily meet current standards, but the report indicates that there is no need to change these now. Some equipment does need minor repairs which will necessitate contact with the suppliers. SB made the following proposal to facilitate repairs to benches:

<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Proposer</b>	<b>Seconded</b>	<b>Resolution</b>
<b>To agree a budget of £100 for the repair of benches</b>	<b>SB</b>	<b>MH</b>	<b>AGREED unanimously</b>

(Post Meeting Note from BL: An unused budget of £200 already exists under running costs for the maintenance of Recreation Ground & Playground Equipment, justified repair costs for the benches will be charged to this account line rather than create a new budget line for this work.

**9. DEFRA Bird Flu Compliance** – DS commented that having installed the fencing / netting extending into the pond, the ducks are much happier and cleaner being able to swim round freely within the fenced area. In response to a question from PW, it was stated that the Parish Council has no involvement in the protection of other birds in the Parish, this is the responsibility of owners.

**10. Refurbishment of the Church pathway** – MH confirmed that five contractors identified by BL had been approached to quote for the repair of the path surface, quotes are awaited.

**11. Farmers Field** – PR reported that around 150 trees with ash dieback had been felled to date, a similar number are still to be felled. He is aiming to complete this task over the next five months, no lone working will take place. FoFF will then start thinking about replanting of around 70-80 trees (anticipated cost £3000 over two years + £600 for chipper hire) starting at the far end around the Scrape. MT commented that there is a need to leave a large glade as recommended by WWT, he has put a planning proposal to PR. MT commented on the perceived ‘elephant in the room’, namely the Scrape which needs significant work. MH stated that there is clearly a need to determine a forward looking plan for felling, planting and the Scrape, PR/MT to take this forward and present to the Council for approval.

**ACTION: FC/05/22 – PR/MT**

**12. Lead Councillor Roles** – Having been joined by new councillors since the last review of roles, MH advised that the subject will be considered further at the February meeting. He requested all councillors to review the current listing published on the website under ‘Parish Council – How We Do Business’ and be ready to suggest amendments at the next meeting.

**ACTION: FC/06/22 - ALL**

**13. Update on Current Issues not covered by above agenda items** – MH referred to an email from Richard Hawkins on 11<sup>th</sup> January regarding the comments made on the Neighbourhood Plan Update at Item 8 in the 8<sup>th</sup> December minutes, this email had been distributed to all councillors prior to the meeting. This will be addressed further at the February meeting.

**ACTION: FC/07/22 - MH**

**14. External Meetings** – None reported

**15. Other Reports from Councillors**

**i. Rights of Way Volunteers** – JR reported that a neighbour of his is being encouraged to take over the running of the local volunteer group, but is concerned about insurance for the works being undertaken, is this covered by the Parish Council. BL responded that it is not as the volunteer group is not connected formally in any way with UPC. JR also asked who is perceived responsible for any dangerous tree within rights of way paths BL stated that the landowner is responsible but it is not always possible to identify ownership. PW stated that any perceived dangerous tree should be reported to WC on the My Wiltshire app.

**ii. Danger of A342 adjacent to the Grist yard** – JR commented that this road is becoming increasingly dangerous with deepening pot holes, even though advisory speed limits have been introduced. PW advised that significant works were planned for November 2021, but these were stopped due to budgetary constraints. It is currently re-scheduled for 25/26 but PW has encouraged WC to undertake an emergency engineering report in the hopes that the significant re-build of the road will be undertaken as a matter of priority soon. When undertaken these works will inevitably cause serious delays / inconvenience for Grist and the public for an undefined period of time, hopefully a serious accident will not happen in the meantime.

**16. Items for Future Agenda (in addition to those identified above)**

**i. Review and Update of the Neighbourhood Plan**

**ii. Arrangements for public meeting on Speeding in the Parish**

**Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2022 – 7.00pm Village Hall (Conference Room)**

There being no further business, the meeting Closed at 8.20pm.

**a. CLERK'S REPORT**

**i. Finance** – The Financial Summary and Bank Reconciliation as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021 has been distributed to all councillors prior to the meeting with this agenda, the accounts are in good order. I have transferred £4,000 from the CIL to the main account to cater for additional project budgets (Upgrade of Church pathway and NP review and preparation. We are now three quarters of the way through the financial year, every effort should be made to appropriately spend budgeted funds by mid-March to ensure that any invoices can be paid in-year.

**ii. Co-option to fill vacancies** – At the time of writing I am expecting one further completed application for co-option.

**iii. Meeting Dates 2022** – It has been agreed with the Chairman and Vice Chairman that the May meeting date will now be Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> and not 11<sup>th</sup> as previously published. The October date has now been confirmed as Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> October as the Hall and Conference Room are being used by Urchfont Players on the 12<sup>th</sup> which would be our normal date.

**Bob Lunn, Clerk to the Council**

**b. COUNCILLORS REPORTS**

**UPC HIGHWAYS REPORT JANUARY 2022**

- Following a representation by Paul Taylor at our December UPC meeting, Openreach have been informed of the telegraph pole opposite Sawmills, which is leaning slightly and enveloped by tree branches thus threatening to bring both the pole and lines down. They have since sent out an engineer to assess the situation.
- With regard to blocked drains, the Sewer Team have again been contacted with an updated list and map, and have promised to move Urchfont up their list of priorities. They have been very busy with staff off sick which has delayed their usual working schedule.
- Mark and I will be carrying out our six monthly Highways survey during the next fortnight.

**Cllrs. Martyn Hollyman and Mark Botham.**

**PROPOSED DEVIZES GATEWAY STATION**

Devizes is the largest town in Wiltshire not to have a mainline railway station.

Trains running from Westbury to Paddington may stop at a Devizes Gateway station at Lydeaway, subject to work identified below.

In 2020 Wiltshire Council (WC) with the Devizes Development Partnership (DDP) received £50,000 funding from the Department of Transport's (DfT's) Restoring Your Railway Ideas Fund to develop a Strategic Outline Case (SOC) for the Devizes Gateway Station. This was submitted in early November 2021 and a result may be possible from DfT in March/April 2022, although tricky to say!

If the SOC is approved the next step would be to develop an Outline Business Case (OBC). An OBC identifies amongst other things a detailed business case with consideration given to items including design and consultation.

It is hoped the Devizes Gateway station might be carrying passengers from about 2025.

Access to the Gateway Station from Devizes might be via minibuses and the station will be within walking distance of Urchfont.

Access to central London from Reading might take half as long using Crossrail's The Elizabeth Line.

Trains from Reading are proposed to run into central London via Crossrail every 5 mins at peak times.

It has been suggested to me that a new station will involve a lot of ancillary buildings but the PC will be consultees and WC will approve or reject applications and agree all materials.

Property experts suggest that a railway station so close to us might result in an uplift of 20% in property values. Hallelujah but of course the impending review to our Neighbourhood Plan should be tasked with identifying Rural Exception Sites outside the Development Boundary. Such sites would produce the cheaper houses which many Parishioners have sought and which will be more necessary than previously should the Gateway station be built.

Fingers crossed on all fronts and there is much for UPC and parishioners to do.

**Cllr Simon Holt**