

DRAFT Minutes of the Urchfont Parish Council (UPC) Full Council Meeting held remotely on Wednesday 13th January 2021.

Present: Councillors: Day (GD – Chairman), Botham (MB – Vice Chairman), Hill (TH), Kemp (MK), Cowen (LC), Creasey (GC), Hollyman (MH), Cottle (SC), Stevens (DS) and Rotherham (PR)

Clerk to the Council: Lunn (BL)

Councilor for Urchfont & The Cannings: Whitehead (PW)

Members of the Public (for all or part of the remote meeting): Mr. D Kinnaird, Mr. S Veitch, Mrs M Whitehead

A. INTRODUCTION

1. Welcome by the Chairman – GD welcomed all to the meeting and hoped that they had enjoyed a good Christmas and New Year in these uncertain times. He noted that some people in the Parish had now received one or two vaccinations which gave hope for the future.

2. Apologies – Councillors all present

B. PLANNING – See separate agenda.

C. FULL COUNCIL MEETING

1. Declarations of Interest – GD declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 6b3.

2. Public Participation / Email input from members of the public and External Reports – GD confirmed with attending members of the public that they did not wish to speak. BL confirmed that he had not received any email representations.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 9th December 2020 – GD advised that an email from Mr Kinnaird had been distributed to all councillors regarding perceived omissions from the minutes at Item 7. BL had subsequently agreed with Mr Kinnaird that the minutes will not be amended but that the content of his email will be published at Appendix 2 of these minutes (on the website only).

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
To approve and sign the minutes unchanged as a true and accurate record of the meeting	MB	TH	AGREED unanimously

4. Action List Status Review and Update Reports from the Minutes of the meeting held on 9th December 2020 – Having received a presentation on the Devizes Gateway Proposals at the December 2020 meeting, GD noted that an item in the current Gazette & Herald referenced the start of a public survey on the proposals. BL asked PW to confirm whether he had received the promised copies of recent correspondence from ex-councillor Philip Cottell on the perceived lack of response from WC on the damaged Lydeaway milestone and Wedhampton footpath crossing the A342, PW responded that he had not. PW indicated that he will nevertheless pursue the issues with WC Highways. BL confirmed that he was not copied in to any of the correspondence on these issues

ACTION: FC/01/21 - PW

5. Finance

a. Financial Summary and Bank Reconciliation as at 31st December 2020 – BL referred to his Clerks report and confirmed that the accounts are in good order. No questions were raised.

b. Projects Budget 20/21 – No proposals were made or updates offered.

c. 21/22 PRECEPT – Having made a decision at the December meeting, subject to confirmation at this meeting, GD asked if anyone had any comments.

Having felt that some councillors had concerns at the December meeting about insufficient Precept funds being required, MH said that he had reviewed the example table showing the impact on Band D property council tax of various increases in the PRECEPT requirement. His conclusion is that UPC could demand more funding with a small impact in terms of pence per week increases on the annual council tax bill.

GD confirmed that he is happy with the decision made in December to restrict the parish council tax element to an increase of 1%, TH agreed on the basis that this demonstrates UPC constraint in current difficult times.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconded	Resolution
To confirm the decision made at the December meeting to submit a PRECEPT requirement of £52,103.50 which will result in an increased Parish element of council tax of £0.93 per annum for a Band D property.	GD	GC	AGREED – 8 votes for and 1 against

BL to submit requirement to WC prior to their deadline of 18th January 2021.

ACTION: FC/02/21 – BL

(Post Meeting Note: PRECEPT requirement emailed to WC Financial Planning on 15th January 2021)

6. Lead Councillor, Working Groups, Clerk & other Written Reports (See Appendix 1 - attached on website only)

a. Clerks Report – No updates reported or clarifications requested

b. Councillor Reports

i. Census 2021 – Further to his written report, MH reported that he has maintained contact with the Wiltshire Census Engagement Manager, Jonathan Corbett, and is receiving publicity information from him. The Office of National Statistics is setting up a support hub to assist census completion, MH held up a number of leaflets that he has received. These could be delivered to households nearer the time of the Census in March, although COVID constraints may prohibit this. This will be the first online Census with a response expectation of around 75%, paper versions will be available for people who are unable to complete online. Publicity could be put out on the website and in Redhorn News. PW wondered whether it would be possible to find out who in the Parish is unlikely to be able to complete on line.

(Post Meeting Note: A Census 21 Local Authorities Toolkit containing background information, campaign messages and campaign assets (leaflets as above etc.) was distributed to all councillors on 5th January 2021. A second Complete Guide toolkit will be available in February, BL will distribute when received.)

ii. UPEG – giving an update to his written report, MB stated that:

- Martin Bodman had identified an additional tree planting site for next year
- Lisa Kinnaird has organised 24 tree planting volunteers, sorted by family groups to ensure compliance with Lockdown / COVID requirements.

iii. UPC Funding for Redhorn News – GD reiterated the points made in his written report. MK wondered how many of the 550 households in the Parish receiving the hard copy also receive the electronic version, should they cancel the hard copy to reduce costs and help the environment? GD was not aware of anyone cancelling their hard copy to date and suggested that cancellation might present logistics issues for those

delivering to households. MK is happy to support the funding proposal, but suggested that Redhorn should consider advertising the fact that electronic versions are available and that hard copies can be cancelled. TH commented that he had been surprised when he received his electronic version that his hard copy did not automatically stop. MB suggested that, as a councillor, he would consider setting an example by cancelling his hard copy in lieu of the electronic version.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
To approve the extension of the current UPC contribution of £1375 to include 2021.	GD	MH	AGREED unanimously

BL pointed out that he had already received the demand for £1375 to cover 2021, but that he did not intend to pay this until post 1st April 2021 when the appropriate funds will be available in the 21/22 budget. The last payment for 2020 was not invoiced until 16th October 2020, with previous payments being made in June 2019 and July 2018. He will advise the Redhorn News Treasurer accordingly.

ACTION: FC/03/21 – BL

(Post Meeting Note: Redhorn Treasurer advised by email of delayed payment on 15th January 2021)

7. Updated UPC Policies – GD referred to the proposed updates of UPC Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Protocol for Remote Meetings which had been distributed by BL prior to the meeting. The updates primarily incorporated environmental requirements identified by UPEG, remote meetings due to COVID and generally updated a number of other areas to reflect actual practice. GD asked if anyone had any comments on these updates, none were raised.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
To approve the updates proposed to UPC Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Protocol for Remote Meetings with immediate effect.	GD	MH	AGREED unanimously

BL to publish the updated policies on the website.

ACTION: FC/04/21 – BL

(Post Meeting Note: Updated Policies published on the website on 15th January 2021)

8. Tree Survey Actions / Quotes for Remedial Works - SC reported that since the last meeting one further quote had been received from Wiltshire Countryside Service for £7,950 in comparison to the quote of £1,225 from Green Farm Tree Care Ltd. No other responses had been received, probably because tree surgeons are busy or perhaps not interested in relatively small works when significant ash die back works are ongoing. GC confirmed that he had not heard from any other contractor.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
Utilising UPC discretion to proceed with fewer than three quotes, to accept the quote from Green Farm Tree Care Ltd for £1,225 and instruct them to commence work.	SC	GC	AGREED unanimously

For audit purposes, to justify use of the UPC discretion clause in UPC Financial Regulations Clause 7a(ii), BL requested a written statement detailing all the contractors approached for this work and the responses received / not received which led to the above proposal.

ACTION: FC/05/21 – SC

9. Assistance to the Community during COVID-19 Restrictions – TH reported that he had not received any enquiries during the latest Lockdown period, many people had now built up their own support mechanisms. Day Lewis now offer a delivery service in some circumstances.

MK reported that the Community Shop situation is changing by the day as follows:

- a. Deliveries - Orders for deliveries are currently being taken by Cecilia & Rodney Gillington by telephone between 9.00 am and 12 noon Mon to Fri. Saturday 9am to 10.30am. Payment is required by card only, customers are telephoned in the afternoon and can collect their orders from outside the shop. A team of volunteers originally organised by UPC, plus new volunteers, are available to make home deliveries if necessary, but these are currently few and far between.
- b. Newspapers - Some customers prefer to collect their daily newspapers from outside the shop, payment is required in advance (cash or vouchers) to do this. Some members of the community already collect and deliver newspapers for friends and neighbours. There have been a few new requests for papers to be delivered more recently from those who are shielding etc and it's hoped to be able to manage this with the help of young Harvey Creasey-Cottle.
- c. Post Office - There are no changes at this time.
- d. Volunteers - The list of shop volunteers is somewhat depleted for obvious reasons - over 50% down on the number in January 2020. This has resulted in a decision to close the shop at 12 noon on Saturdays from 9th January. A small group of volunteers are willing to do two or more sessions a week to keep the shop open for which the Managers and the shop Committee are extremely grateful. However, consideration needs to be given to how much we can expect from volunteers and how well they are protected. Therefore, there may be a case for reducing the shop hours further at some stage.
- e. COVID Safety - The Community Shop management and committee are continually reviewing Covid-19 related arrangements in the shop to try and keep staff, volunteers and customers as safe as possible and will do their best to support the local community throughout this crisis.
- f. Protecting Volunteers - The majority of shop volunteers are no longer spring chickens and are at risk from COVID infection along with everyone else even if they have had the vaccine, but for many the vaccine still is some time away. Unfortunately, the very important NHS message '*There is a chance you might still get or spread coronavirus even if you have the vaccine*' is not being made very clear and the consequence of this is that many people who have been vaccinated are under the false impression that they no longer pose a risk to others and therefore no longer need to abide by the social distancing rules and most importantly do not need to wear a mask. There is a need for everyone in the community to continue to adhere to shop requests regarding wearing a mask. keeping their distance and any other guidelines the shop management introduce. The queuing system outside the shop often results in small groups of people congregating for periods of time. A poster will be going up within the next few days requesting that masks are worn outside the shop as well as inside.

GD thanked TH and MK for their continued efforts to support the Community.

10. Use of Facebook by UPC Working Groups – GD stated that whilst UPC had decided against establishing a Council Facebook page, it is recognised that working groups are finding significant benefit from utilising this resource. It is felt that this recognition should be documented. MB noted that the UPEG Facebook membership has grown to 67, including 3 councillors, and is gaining growing evidence of environmental issues and potential projects within the Parish. Not being the biggest fan of Facebook, LC nevertheless recognised the value to these working groups.

Proposal	Proposer	Secunder	Resolution
UPC recognises and confirms its support for use of Facebook by UPEG and Community Bell	GD	SC	AGREED unanimously

11. UPC Highways – MH reported that the first UPC survey was completed some 12 months ago which identified 61 issues of which 17 have been resolved. The Parish Steward and WC Sewer Team have responded well. Potholes near Franklin's Farm and on the road to Redhorn Hill, amongst others, are getting worse, it is understood that the Parish Steward has referred these to the WC Highways Patch Team as they are beyond his

remit. Reports on the My Wiltshire App by the owners of Franklin's Farm have received 'Case Closed' responses when no work has been undertaken. PW commented that this happens when work is transferred to another department or agent, works in this area are actually scheduled to commence on 29th January.

MH and MB have recently completed a new survey, unfortunately the WC Area Highways Engineer did not attend as previously agreed. A copy of the report has been sent to BL who will distribute to all councillors for information.

ACTION: FC/06/21 – BL

(Post Meeting Note: Copy of UPC Highways Survey distributed to all councillors and PW on 14th January 2021)

MH is disappointed with the lack of response from the Area Highways Engineer who has also failed to attend arranged Zoom meeting(s). PW commented that the Engineer is not a good communicator and is under significant pressure to resolve issues across his patch. More highways work than ever is being undertaken in Wiltshire, but the weather and COVID constraints are not helping. PW suggested that MH send copies of any unanswered correspondence to him and he will try to pursue action.

ACTION: FC/07/21 - MH

12. Farmers Field – PR reported that:

- Approx. 27 trees remained to be felled from the original list approved by the Forestry Commission, although ash die back could increase this number.
- Due to COVID Lockdown constraints, use of volunteers in the Field has been cancelled. However, PR proposed that he and Jeff Vickers, both qualified in chain saw use, should continue to fell trees complying with social distance rules etc. unless councillors are uncomfortable with this. GD believed this to be permissible on the basis that this is work which cannot be undertaken at home and as long as two operatives are present. LC agreed citing the 1 + 1 rule for meeting in a public place. No objections or concerns were raised on this proposal.
- Difficulties are being experienced in sourcing the required 10 foot second hand shipping container (for storage purposes) due to lack of availability largely arising out of Brexit logistical conditions. A container will be found in due course, attempts to obtain three quotes will continue as an order has not yet been placed. Mr Milanese has agreed to keep equipment until the end of March. The hard standing for the container has been completed.
- MK confirmed that the use of dead hedging for fencing will be initiated in due course, but not until the container is in place.

13. Update on Current Parish Issues not covered by above agenda items – GD asked about the alleged vandalism to the fencing on the pathway to Oakfrith Wood. BL confirmed that the two barbed wire top strands and stock fencing below had been cut in at least four places, he had requested Mark Goddard to quote for repairs / patching and discussions were ongoing due to the perceived cost. Due to the type of wire, it has been suggested that professional or good quality wire cutters had been used. A potential H&S issue, the cut wires have been wound back into the fence to prevent injury. GD asked whether any such damage had been noted anywhere else in the Parish, nothing had been noted.

Chairman closed the meeting for public participation

Mr Kinnaird commented that he had heard that local farmers believed the wire may have been cut by persons engaged in hare coursing activities.

Chairman reopened the Council meeting.

PW commented that the structure of the fencing is reliant on the tension of the barbed wire, he suggested that any repairs should maintain this tension and that just joining the cut wires is unlikely to achieve this. BL will discuss further with Mark Goddard.

ACTION: FC/08/21 - BL

14. External Meetings – None reported

15. Councillors' Other Reports – None reported

16. Items for Future Agenda

- a. Pathway to Oakfrith Wood (To be addressed when physical meetings in Village Hall are restarted with public attendance)
- b. B3098 Speed Zones – update from Wiltshire Council – PW advised that he is currently unable to get officers out on the ground due to COVID constraints, he will advise progress in due course.

Date of Next Scheduled Meeting: 10th February 2021

There being no other business the meeting closed at 8.18pm

APPENDIX 1 UPC MINUTES JANUARY 2021

a. CLERK'S REPORT

1. Update on Clerk's actions from December Meeting – none attributed.

2. **Finance** – The Financial Summary and Bank Reconciliation as at 31st December 2020 have been distributed to all councillors. This information demonstrates that the accounts are in good order. The predicted Reserve at 31st March 2021 at £15,814 is higher than the target primarily because of the unexpected Small Business Grant received from WC and current predicted spend by the end of the financial year, the Reserve will undoubtedly change over the next three months as available funds are utilised.

3. **UPC Policies** – proposed updates of Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Protocol for Remote Meetings (all with changes highlighted) have been distributed to all councillors prior to the meeting and require approval at the January meeting (Agenda Item 7).

4. PRECEPT DEMAND 21/22 – At the December meeting Members agreed the following:

“Subject to final confirmation at the January meeting, to propose a demand of £52,103.50 which will result in an increased Parish element of council tax of £0.93 per annum for a Band D property.”

Assuming that this PRECEPT demand is confirmed at the January meeting then it will be submitted to WC by the deadline of 18th January 2021.

5. **CORONAVIRUS UPDATE** – The website (Latest News) has been updated to advise on the latest National Lockdown situation announced on 4th January 2021 with a link to the gov.uk website detailing all the restrictions in place. The Urchfont Playground in the Recreation Ground can remain open during the lockdown, but everyone is advised to take extreme care and maintain social distancing if and when using the equipment.

Bob Lunn, Clerk to the Council

b. COUNCILLOR REPORTS

i. **CENSUS 2021** - The ten yearly census by the ONS (Office for National Statistics) will be on 21st March this year. The ONS considers it vital that partnerships are formed with local councils, and UPC has already made contact with our Census Engagement Manager and offered our assistance with it's delivery. This has been very well received and we look forward to working with the ONS in the forthcoming weeks. This will be the first online census, and it is expected to have a 75% uptake by this method. Those who do not have a computer, or do not feel confident in completing the census online, will have the opportunity to complete a paper version. There will also be available assistance for those with other impairments such as sight etc. The government will be conducting a TV and Media campaign in the run up to March.

A copy of the Councillors Handbook on the Census was distributed to all councillors on 9th November 2020.

Cllr Martyn Hollyman

ii. UPC update from the UPEG virtual meeting on 14/12/20

Present - Lisa Kinnaird (LK), Katharine Wale (KW), Peter Newell (PN), Sam Dixon (SD), Liz Clifton Page (LCP), Mark Botham (MB) and Graham Day (GD)

Key points

- LCP and SD met with Richard Bromley to discuss the measurement of the carbon footprint of Urchfont. Richard has kindly offered to prepare a rough first pass carbon footprint and an estimate of household emissions.
- LK met with Martin Bodman and James Noble of Plant for our lives (PFOL). Martin and James agreed to plant 50 oaks and 700 hedging whips on Martin's land. This agreement is managed under the friendship agreement between PFOL and the landowner and hence is not a UPC project. However, Lisa will be organising local volunteers to help with planting. More agreements of this type will be forthcoming .
- Unfortunately Farmers Field did not meet the PFOL criteria for the provision of free hedging whips. The Friends of Farmers Field will now use the existing brushwood on site to create a "dead hedge"
- The ongoing use of Facebook was reviewed at the meeting. The UPEG group on Facebook now has 62 members and continues to grow at a steady rate. The group page connects UPEG with, and is the main avenue for recruiting volunteers to assist with planting etc. The page has a lot of interesting information and articles on environmental matters and initiatives. In summary the Facebook page is working well for UPEG
- UPEG has requested an update from UPC on progress with updating financial policies to include environmental requirements as previously reported. Bob Lunn has prepared a policy update for review and approval by UPC on 13/01/21.

Cllr Mark Botham

iii. Funding for Redhorn News

As councillors will be aware, there has been a longstanding policy of direct support from UPC for the Redhorn News monthly magazine. This is one of our major lines of communication about parish issues.

At the UPC meeting in December 2018, Council agreed a 2-year funding package for Redhorn News. This comprised UPC paying 50% of the annual subscription of £5 for the delivery of 550 monthly copies (enough to cover 1 copy for every household in the Parish).

I have been in discussions with the Redhorn News Treasurer, who would be happy to extend the current arrangements for a further 12 months. As a result, I am requesting approval for the sum of £1375 to cover continued delivery of 550 paper copies of the magazine throughout our Parish.

Cllr. Graham Day

Email from David Kinnaird to Clerk to the Council on 15th December 2020, copied to Chairman and Vice Chairman

Hi Bob,

Just reviewing the minutes in regard to the agenda item I raised and there are 2 key omissions:

1. I noted in the meeting that Wiltshire Council provide a direct link to all public meeting to permit public attendance without pre-registration.

2. I also noted the NALC guidance was that “The aim should be to allow and encourage public access to meetings as much as possible, in the same way as the council would have done for physical meetings.” I further noted that the requirement to pre-register as an observer was not a pre-requisite for a physical meeting and we therefore did not comply with this guidance.

These were the fundamental points in my argument and I think it should have been captured alongside my tongue-in-cheek comments on penalties for my personal disorganisation!

Can these changes be made in the final minutes please.

David

Many thanks as ever,

David