



**DRAFT Minutes of the Urchfont Parish Council (UPC) Full Council Meeting held in Urchfont Village Hall on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

**Present: Councillor's: Moscrop (PM - Chair), Bamber (SB – Vice Chair), Hill (TR), Hollyman (MH) 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, Mary Craddock, Malcolm Taylor, Dominic Hickey, Stephanie Szakala, Lee Acton, Bill & Anthea Donald, Peter Askins**

**A. INTRODUCTION**

**1. Welcome by the Chair** – PM welcomed all to the meeting. As this is the last meeting for MH who is leaving the Council, PM took the opportunity to thank him for his service, commitment, and valued advice during his term of office.

**2. Apologies:** Cllrs Holt (SH), Gibb (HG) and Rotherham (PR)

**Note:** As there are only 5 councillors present, resolutions made at this meeting will need to be ratified at the August meet due to less than 6 councillors being present (Standing Orders Clause 6 refers). PM agreed to review Standing Orders against legislation in this respect.

**ACTION: FC/52/23 - PM**

**3. Nomination(s) for Councillor Co-Option** – No completed applications have been received to date, although papers have been previously sent to two interested parties. One had subsequently deferred his application probably until next year due to the level of his other commitments. Nothing had been heard from the second individual.

**B. PLANNING** – See Separate Agenda

**C. JULY FULL COUNCIL MEETING**

**1. Declarations of Interest** – SB declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 5b.

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

**Community Shop Financial Assistance Application**

Maria Kemp read out a statement regarding the application (See the full statement at Appendix II on website version only).

Peter Askins expressed concern that the Council had not dealt with the Community Shop application in line with freedoms given to them under the 2013 Localism Act. He believed that SB should be allowed to debate and vote on this application and that the decision to re-consider the application is not necessary.

Nicky Hammond expressed the view that the toilet in the shop was originally for disabled use, current plan is for staff and restricted use by the public. The shop is undoubtedly very successful financially, why is the Council providing public money for this project.

Although not present, David Myers had submitted a further email on this subject which has been copied to all councillors prior to this meeting and is attached at Appendix II on the website version only.

**Gateway Signs on Crookwood Lane**

As a resident, PW asked when the damaged signs would be replaced. BL stated that a budget proposal would be made council at the August meeting to facilitate purchase.

**ACTION: FC/53/23 - BL**

**School Pathway and modification to start of pathway to Oakfrith Wood**

As a resident, PW asked when these works are expected to be completed. TH confirmed that the chosen contractor intends to start work as soon as the School breaks for their summer holiday.

**3. Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2023**

<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Proposer</b>	<b>Seconder</b>	<b>Resolution</b>
<b>To approve and sign the minutes unchanged as a true and accurate record of the meeting.</b>	<b>PM</b>	<b>TH</b>	<b>AGREED with one abstention due to non-attendance at the meeting</b>

**4. Action List Status Review and Update Reports from the Minutes of the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2023** – BL reported that there had been very little change or update to the last listing he had distributed to councillors following the June meeting, he said that he would re-distribute to all councillors and urged them to provide him with updates.

**5. Finance**

**a. To receive a Financial Statement and Bank Reconciliation as at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023** – BL confirmed that the Financial Summary and Bank reconciliation as at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023 had been distributed to councillor’s prior to the meeting. The accounts are in good order as expected at this early stage of the year. BL requested councillor’s to ratify the individual payments made during June and shown on the Bank Reconciliation Statement and on screen. This is an audit requirement.

<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Proposer</b>	<b>Seconder</b>	<b>Resolution</b>
<b>To ratify all the individual payments made in June as shown on the Bank reconciliation</b>	<b>TH</b>	<b>PM</b>	<b>AGREED Unanimously</b>

**b. Proposal for financial assistance from the Community Shop (see extract from 10<sup>th</sup> May minutes and email from Mr. Myers Attached at Appendix II on website version only)**

PM stated that this perception of conflict of interest and validity of the vote to approve the Community Shop application at the 10<sup>th</sup> May meeting has been a very emotive and time consuming issue which needs to be resolved tonight. The shop is a registered Community Asset and needs to be supported by the Parish Council as it has been in the past. The Council took the decision to re-consider this application to ensure full transparency and compliance with procedures and policies.

PW stated that he had sought advice from the WC Monitoring Officer / Director Legal and Governance on this procedural issue relating to perceived conflict of interest and paraphrased the following advice received:

“Conflict of interest is about whether she (SB) can maintain a balanced objective approach to the decision – as she represents the organisation that the Council was thinking of funding there could be a conflict of interest. It is slightly different if she was not appointed to the Committee by the Council. One way she could deal with the conflict of interest would have been to sit the matter out to avoid being seen as biased. Or she could have received a dispensation from me. However what’s done is done. The only way to challenge the decision now is to judicially review it – that must be done within 12 weeks of the decision. That clearly will not happen here. In terms of what you say, if anything, at the Parish meeting, you are entitled to say that the interest was non-pecuniary. You could direct the complainant to me about “conflict of interest” concerns. For the

future, the Councillor should consider sitting out Committee related decisions or get a dispensation.”

From memory, BL believed that this advice may be somewhat different to that previously received from WC Governance and also stressed that SB had never been advised to or had decided herself to declare a pecuniary interest.

PM stated that on this basis it would appear that SB can vote again tonight, PW countered this by saying that as the vote on the 10th May was considered legal based on the above advice and the fact that UPC Standing Orders states that a decision cannot be changed for six months, the original decision should stand without further voting.

PM expressed disappointment that this advice had not been made available to UPC prior to the meeting.

The vote and decision taken at the 10<sup>th</sup> May meeting stands.

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

**a. Clerks Report** - Following the resignation of MH tonight, BL reported that FOUR vacancies will exist. He had been alerted to an additional expression of interest and will send out the nomination papers shortly. JR asked BL why he thought potential candidates are hard to attract. BL said that attracting candidates has never been easy and similarly applies to other councils. Some people just do not want to be committed to meetings etc., a lot in the Parish have other valuable to the community commitments and other, especially the younger age group have full time work and personal commitments. Adverts are put in Redhorn News virtually every month. JR advocated that we should perhaps do something more creative to attract volunteers.

### **b. Councillor reports**

**i. Damaged watering Cans at Cemetery** – TH expressed the view that the old cans had been vandalized rather than wear and tear. Council thanks go to the badminton club for replacing the cans. BL mentioned that the new bus stop in the Farmers Field lay-by also appears to have been vandalized.

**ii. Highways** – although resigning tonight, MH stated that is willing and prepared to carry out the next survey, which is due about now, and attend follow up meetings hopefully with a named successor for the role.

**7. Lead Councillor Roles and Responsibilities** – PM had reviewed and distributed a revised listing of roles and TOR, the only role to be decided was the Highways (including 6 monthly survey) which Mark and Martyn had previously undertaken, PM and MH to consider outside of this meeting who might best take on this role. TH suggested that as he is involved with both the tennis club and rights of way group, that he should take on the lead role for these. In view of his potential absence, JR suggested that he would be willing to take on a project role but not lead councillor role.

**ACTION: FC/54/23 – PM / MH**

PM asked councillors to proactively take on the roles listed with immediate effect.

**ACTION: FC/55/23 - ALL**

**8. Speed Indicator Signs for B3098** – MH explained that an order had been placed and paid for with S G Manufacturing Ltd of Fordingbridge for the indicator and poles. Despite promises of delivery dates, excuses were subsequently made about failed testing and workforce sickness, nothing has yet been received and no one now answers telephone calls. The company has been trading for some 16 years and is still shown as active on search engines. The UPC solicitor sent a letter to the company but did not receive a response. His advice is to go through the small claims court to try and recover the monies paid, but it could be that the company has gone bust. BL will be submitting an application shortly which is subject to a fee dependent on the financial extent of the claim. UPC can hopefully claim the VAT element from HMRC. In the meantime, UPC may need to consider allocating an additional budget for a new purchase. PM thanked MH for his work on this project.

**9. UPEG** – Deferred to the August meeting in the absence of SH

**10. Urchfont Parish Neighbourhood Plan** – to receive an update – (Last WG meeting minutes Attached at Appendix III on website version only) – TH asked councillors if they had any comments on the attached

minutes, none were raised. PM asked what the response had been to the house drop questionnaire, TH responded that disappointingly only 3 had been returned to date. All households are encouraged to respond by the deadline date. TH said the next meeting of the WG is on the 25<sup>th</sup> July.

PW mentioned that the Wiltshire local plan had been published and appeared to indicate a requirement for 34 new properties in Urchfont, TH responded that current NP WG thinking is that they will identify around 30.

**11. August 2023 Meetings** – BL commented that he had already received 2 planning applications that will need to be considered at the August meeting. TH could not really understand the logic for cancelling the August meeting if most councillors are going to be available. BL suggested that the Full Council agenda could be restricted to essential items requiring decisions to reduce the potential length of the meeting. All councillors at this meeting indicated that they would be available to attend. Based on discussion, PM indicated that the August 2023 meetings will go ahead as usual.

**12. Update on Current Issues not covered by above agenda items**

**i. EV Charging points in the Parish** – JR recognised advice that the Parish Council should not get involved with this, but is keen to help the garage who is willing to install by providing any advice that we can. BL stated that WC have published a lot of advice on this, but from his own work experience it is necessary to seek information from a number of potential suppliers who will give advice on installation requirements, costs and types of equipment provided.

**ii. First Responders** – JR reported that the First Responders website was down for part of the application period and that some people have been disappointed that they now cannot apply until next year. He was not aware if anybody from the Parish had been successful with an application for this year's training. He has requested a quote for necessary kit, but to date this has not been provided.

**iii. Grass strip outside Fir Tree Cottage** – TH reported that as expected this is a very low priority job for WC and could take years to fulfil. The Parish Council may be allowed to fund and appoint a Highways approved contractor to do the work, TH is awaiting specifications for the works before seeking quotes.

**13. External Meetings** – None Reported

**14. Other Reports from Councillor's** – None raised

**15. Items for Future Agenda**

Proposal to reduce the number of meetings held by UPC

There being no other business the meeting ended at 8.32pm

**Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> August 2023 - 7.00pm Village Hall (Conference Room)**

## APPENDIX I TO JULY 2023 UPC MINUTES

### a. CLERK'S REPORT

i. **Finance** – Copies of the Financial Summary and Bank Reconciliation at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023 will be distributed to all councillors prior to the meeting. The accounts are in good order.

ii. **Councillor Vacancies** – UPC currently has three vacancies, plus one more which will apply immediately following this meeting as a result of the resignation of Cllr Martyn Hollyman. I have sent nomination papers to two potential candidates who have expressed a keen interest in joining the Council, I am awaiting the completed forms which can hopefully be considered at this meeting.

iii. **Best Kept Village** – As previously announced, Urchfont won the Kennet Medium Village section. Judging is currently taking place during July for the County competition. Have the judges been seen yet?

**Bob Lunn, Clerk to the Council**

### b. COUNCILLORS WRITTEN REPORTS

#### **Damaged watering Cans at Cemetery**

At the last UPC meeting, Mrs Brenda Potter raised the matter of how the two watering cans used by parishioners to tend to graves at the cemetery had been damaged by someone puncturing holes in the bottoms making them unusable. This wanton damage is disgraceful and so uncommon in our village.

Members of the Badminton Club, having seen the UPC minutes, have agreed to replace the two watering cans at the Clubs expense, as a gesture of good will.

**Councillor Trevor Hill**

## APPENDIX II TO JULY 23 UPC MINUTES

### EXTRACT FROM 10<sup>th</sup> MAY MINUTES REGARDING COMMUNITY SHOP FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE APPLICATION

c. **Proposal for financial assistance from the Community Shop (See Appendix II on website version only)** – Bill Donald (BD) was invited to present the Shop proposal and made the following presentation based on his script below supported by on screen slides.

**“Sponsors** - I’m very glad to tell you that both Sarah Bamber and Pete Rotherham are sponsors for this financial assistance request.

**Our Plan** - Back in October I presented our ideas for relocating the shop’s stockroom and toilet, to make life easier, safer and more comfortable for our volunteers. I mentioned that I might come back and ask for funding, so following your full support with our planning application and following full agreement with both Wadworth and Building Regulations here I am.

**Why are we doing this?** 5 main reasons to discuss...Health and Safety, Stock Control , Sales, Financial Savings, Toilet Improvement

**Health & Safety** - The vast majority of our volunteers are over retirement age and access to the stockroom, particularly in bad weather is difficult. The stockroom isn’t big enough for our needs and gets very congested so is perhaps an accident waiting to happen. When a volunteer is out in the stockroom, this leaves us vulnerable with only one volunteer in the shop. In retail, ideally deliveries should go straight into a stockroom. For us this is impossible and stock gets placed on the shop floor, becoming a hazard. Our hope is that in the main all deliveries will go straight into the new stockroom. We have other stock holding in cupboards above the shelves. This stock is only accessible on step ladders which many of our volunteers find impossible, and dangerous, so we hope the new stockroom will reduce our reliance on this space. Finally, the current toilet door opens blindly into queuing Post Office Customers which is not ideal. We plan to change this by having the door open into the new stockroom.

**Stock Control** - This project will provide the opportunity for better stock control, improving stock rotation and reducing the likely hood of stock going out of date. A future aim is to improve our frozen food offering with a freezer for stock in this location.

**Sales** - Improved stock control will lead to increased sales, less waste and more profit.

**Financial Savings** - Currently the stockroom has to be air conditioned in summer to prevent our chocolate from melting! This is not efficient and will not be required going forward, hence reducing our electricity consumption

**Toilet Improvement** - We accept that we have to have a toilet though it does have minimal use. The new toilet area is a more hyenic alternative, will not open onto the shop floor and be less disruptive to trade. I’d like to preempt any questions asking if the shop toilet is a public toilet. It is not. However, it is available to anyone on request.

**Costings** - A lot of the work will be done by volunteers hence reducing the total cost significantly. Materials are estimated at just over £2,000 with labour and other professional fees estimated at £1,000, Totaling some £3,100

**Why should the Council support the shop?** - The shop was voted the 2nd most important Village asset in the last Neighbourhood Plan, second only the Pond which is well supported financially by the council as you know. It’s a lifeline for many in the village and those in the wider parish and surrounding areas. This development will support the needs of the volunteers to make their time at the shop easier and safer. If we don’t offer a safe and happy place to work we won’t attract the volunteers needed to run our shop. Ongoing investment in retail is essential, we can’t keep still. This year we have already had to rebuild our back-office PC and replace an aging till. We may also have to replace one of our less efficient freezers at a cost of over £1,000. The shop is unlikely to make a surplus this year especially with our anticipated electricity costs increasing by about 50%.

Before I finish, I would just like to respond to the letter from Mr Myers to the Council - I think I’ve illustrated clear and justifiable reasons for this project and indicated that the volunteers, the shop and the Parish will benefit from a new stockroom. You’ve also heard from a number of both volunteers and customers supporting this project. Mr Myers has inaccurately quoted the shop as having reserves of £31,000. Our retained earnings are £31,000, however, this includes the value of the stock along with the working capital in the current account that allows us to buy stock. In reality we have £18,000 in our savings account. We have been using this reserve over the past couple of years, investing and improving the shop which many of you know. The committee and I feel that as a minimum, we need to keep in our reserves double our stock holding which is about £15,000. As we are getting close to this figure we are asking for this Financial Assistance. Mr Myers has

suggested that this application does not comply with UPC Financial Assistance rules. The clerk has assured me this is not the case.

Thank you”

The Chairman closed the meeting for public participation

Nicky Hammond pointed out that signage for the shop toilet keeps changing, it is for disabled people to use on request. She expressed the view that the shop is successful and should pay for the upgrade works itself, why should the works be funded out of public funds. She recommended that UPC should reject the application. PW disagreed, the shop is a key community asset, it is fundamental that UPC support it. If the shop should close it will never reopen as is the case in several other local villages. PM summarised the letter of objection (displayed on screen and attached at Appendix II on the website version only) from David Myers as requested. BL added that he had received seven letters of support (briefly displayed on screen and attached at Appendix II on website version only).

Liz Turner supported the shop application, recognizing the extent of volunteer effort and time involved in its operation.

Ian Walker, a shop volunteer, totally supports the application. He considered the outside toilet to be a significant improvement and noted that he was not aware of anyone being refused use of the current toilet. He could not understand the opposition being raised by David Myers who he did not believe currently used the shop.

Anthea Turner emphasized the importance of the shop to the Village and the work of the volunteers; she fully supported the application.

Mary Craddock stated that if the shop closes, then the Village will also lose the post office.

The Chairman reopened the Council meeting

SH commented that he did not like the tone of the objection from David Myers, especially the bold type emphasis. It is good that the shop is looking to improve its facilities and storage, he totally supported the application. JR considered this a good project and totally supported the application. He wondered whether the toilet door could have a code lock to facilitate access. BD did not like this idea, he considered that once known the code might increase usage in and out of hours, leading to increased maintenance time and costs. SB was pleased to note the level of support tonight and in writing and emphasized that if the shop had to close for whatever reason, it would likely never reopen, a great loss to the community SB also reiterated that the improvements would significantly benefit the volunteers and did not agree with a lot of comments made by Mr. Myers.

<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Proposer</b>	<b>Seconder</b>	<b>Resolution</b>
<b>To pay the requested contribution of £1500 towards the Community Shop modification works as approved by WC Planning</b>	<b>SB</b>	<b>HG</b>	<b>AGREED unanimously</b>

**EMAILS FROM MR DAVID MYERS ON 13<sup>th</sup> JUNE and 7<sup>th</sup> JULY 2023 (Already distributed to Councillors.**

Once again, as a Council-Tax payer of Urchfont, I’m objecting to the application from the Community Shop for funding towards the cost of their project.

The resolution to approve this (UPC meeting 10th May 2023) was proposed by Sarah Bamber. As it related to money, I would argue that she should have declared a pecuniary interest, rather than non-pecuniary, as the applicant was the Shop Committee, of which she is a member. Consequently, I believe the original decision should be nullified and the application considered.

Regarding Simon Holt’s comments, recorded in the Minutes of that meeting, my letter was not intended to be published, but read to the Council by Bob Lunn. When I sent it to him, I explained that “Certain words and phrases are emboldened, underlined, or in upper case, for emphasis, and I’d ask you to read them as such, please.” Had I been at the meeting, that is how I would have

presented my opposition.

It's reported that Mr Donald accused me of inaccurately quoting the Shop as having reserves of £31,000 ..... . My quote of £31,000 was entirely correct. The Balance Sheet, produced by Mr Donald, clearly shows this.

#### **CAPITAL AND RESERVES**

<b>Net Surplus / Deficit for the year</b>	<b>£ 1,896</b>
<b>Reserves Brought Forward</b>	<b>£29,143</b>
<b>Total Capital and Reserves</b>	<b>£31,039</b>

I also went on to say that over £27,000 of this was in the bank.

#### **The Urchfont Community Shop Association Ltd**

##### **Balance Sheet for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022**

<b>Tangible Assets</b>	<b>£ -</b>
<b>Current Assets</b>	
<b>Debtors Control Account</b>	<b>£ 901</b>
<b>Stock</b>	<b>£ 7,826</b>
<b>Cash at bank and in hand</b>	<b>£27,074</b>

He gave a figure of £18,000 for the Savings account, but didn't quantify the amount in the Current account, which would have been over £9,000, making available cash of over £27,000.

Mr Donald went on: "The Committee and I feel that as a minimum, we need to keep in our reserves double our stock holding which is about £15,000. As we are getting close to this figure we are asking for this Financial Assistance."

He didn't explain 'why' there's a need to retain such a large sum, and there's certainly no commercial basis for this. I'm not suggesting there shouldn't be any reserve, but it does seem excessively high. Even £10,000 would be more than enough for 'emergencies', including replacing a freezer. Nonetheless, £15,000 would still leave £12,000+ available and £10,000 would leave £17,000. Either way, these amounts are nowhere near 'getting close' to any reasonable reserve and easily cover the £1,500 wanted.

Mr Donald said that the current account is 'working capital', for buying stock, but stock is constantly being sold and turned into cash, which can be used for replenishment and to meet the overheads, so there is no validity in that argument.

I believe the Council was misled into thinking that the Shop is getting short of money, when this very clearly isn't so.

Mr Donald referred to Financial Savings by not having to use the air-conditioning but won't the toilet have to be heated in the winter, so it's comfortable for the users and to stop the pipes freezing? This is likely to be over a longer period than using the air-conditioning which, from my own experience of such a system, is not expensive to run.

Under UPC's own rules for funding:

- There has to be a clear and justifiable need. The Shop committee may feel there's a need for this project, and that's its prerogative, but I don't believe it's 'justifiable'. It's not essential to the survival of the Shop, and won't bring in any more customers or increase turnover.
- The Parish as a whole will be seen to benefit. What possible benefit will the Parish as a whole derive? What was originally available for all to use, has now become a 'Staff Only' toilet anyway, in



what is meant to be a Community shop! It might benefit the staff and volunteers, but they are not 'the Parish as a whole'.

- There has to be a clear need for funding. Philip Whitehead said "the shop is a key community asset, it is fundamental that UPC support it" and I wouldn't argue, when it needs support! But it doesn't! Only if it's facing possible closure should Public Money be used, and then, only if this will ensure it won't close. With more than £27,000 in the bank, as reported in the last accounts, not £18,000 as suggested in Mr Donald's presentation, there clearly isn't a 'need'.

There is constant publicity about how well the Shop is doing and that more than £7,000 was taken over Scarecrows weekend. This itself should have yielded at least £2,000 in surplus, more than enough to cover the £1,500 being requested from the Parish Council and, therefore, we taxpayers. Clearly, there is no question of an inability to fund this project in its entirety.

I consider that UPC's criteria for funding has not been met. There is no justification for Public Money to be given for this project and the application should be refused.

I am not against giving financial support to the Shop where it is necessary to safeguard its continuance, but this request doesn't fall into that category.

David Myers  
13th June 2023

Further to my email of 13th June 2023, on the subject of an application for financial assistance submitted by the Community Shop, I have some more comments.

When the request for funding was made to UPC (24th April 2023), the project had already started.

The application for Listed Buildings Consent was submitted on 7th November 2022 and approved on 8th March 2023 and the work had begun.

No outside funding had been arranged in advance, yet the Committee still went ahead, so they must have been prepared to cover the costs from their own more than adequate resources, there being no guarantee of external money being available; indeed, none had been sought at this point.

I would argue, therefore, that this could be deemed a retrospective application to UPC, which is against its policy: **Other Procedural Notes:** Projects will not be approved retrospectively.

Although a decision to support the request was made at the May UPC meeting, it was subject to ratification and, therefore, only provisional, not secured, but this still hasn't stopped the work continuing. Clearly, this funding wasn't (and isn't) essential.

The Council is bound by the rules set for its governance. These cannot be varied. If an application for funding does not meet ALL of the criteria, it MUST be refused and, I believe, this application falls into that category: It does not benefit the Parish as a whole; there is no clear need for funding, given the 'Cash at Bank and in Hand' of more than £27,000 shown in the latest accounts, to which I referred in detail in my last communication.

With inflation at a very high level, and a significant number of retirees in the Parish who can't ask for, or even receive, a 'pay-rise', the Council must be mindful of how it spends our money. There must be a proven need. In my opinion, the Shop hasn't proved a need.

David Myers  
7th July 2023

## **STATEMENT MADE BY MARIA KEMP AT THE 12<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2023 MEETING**

At the October 2022 Council meeting, the shop's Chairman Bill Donald made a presentation to councillors about the status of our community shop and our plans to relocate the stockroom to the inside of the shop. At the end of the presentation he stated, and I quote from the minutes;

"If we get consent, we may be coming back to you with a funding request"

On the 8th of February, our planning application was supported by UPC. Having received approval from Wadworths and Wiltshire Council we agreed to approach the council for assistance with funding.

To ensure that we followed the correct protocol regarding our proposed funding application I requested a pre-application meeting with the then-chairman and parish clerk. The clerk was unable to attend but Bill and I met with the Chairman to discuss the process.

Following this we were advised that the paperwork and a sponsor was unnecessary since the request would be treated as a 'project' rather than a request for a grant. However, we would be expected to present our case in detail at the forthcoming council meeting. This was put on the agenda for the April meeting as item 5b Proposed Contribution to the Community Shop. However, following a complaint from Mr Myers that the appropriate paperwork had not been completed item 5b was deferred to the May meeting.

Sarah Bamber who was and remains our sponsor, sought advice about being legitimately able to act as sponsor and proposer. She was reassured that she was able to do so.

Having completed and submitted the said form, at the May meeting Sarah proposed that the council support our request. The council unanimously agreed to pay the requested contribution.

However, before the funds were transferred as agreed, Mr Myers yet again raised a complaint. On this occasion, it was that Sarah Bamber should have declared a 'pecuniary interest'. She should not. Sarah will gain no financial benefit from this funding. She is not paid and does not receive any benefits or advantages of any kind. What she does do is give her time willingly and freely to the community. Furthermore, you as council appointed her as your shop representative.

In this small community where we are fortunate enough to have so many groups and activities, there is almost always a sitting councillor or indeed several who are involved in other groups. For example Rights of Way, Friends of Farmers Field, Scarecrow etc. Sarah is no different. Being a member of a 'committee' is no different to being 'A Friend of'. There have been numerous occasions in the past and recently when councillors who are involved in other groups have been able to partake in discussions and vote on proposals. Only if a pecuniary interest is apparent should voting rights be suspended. Recent events are highlighting serious inconsistencies in the council's processes.

To date, we have done everything as advised by Urchfont Parish Council. We have followed the rules regarding planning etc. Both the shop committee and Wiltshire Council have tolerated ridiculous time-wasting complaints, and we as the shop committee have had to tolerate rude and abusive emails.

As a result of yet further interference by Mr Myers we now find ourselves here yet again.

It is more than obvious that we the shop committee have been singled out and are being asked to jump through hoops that to date others have not.

I would ask that you the council do the right thing and simply honour your original agreement by ratifying the payment and not be drawn into yet another time-wasting discussion to satisfy the needs of one individual.

Thank you

Maria Kemp (Vice Chair Urchfont Community Shop Association)

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE NP WORKING GROUP ON TUESDAY 27<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 23 IN URCHFONTS VILLAGE HALL**

**Present:** Debbie Carr-Jones (DCJ); Stuart Davis (SD); Rob Dolan (RD); Trevor Hill (TH); Simon Holt (SH); Sally Stephens (SS).

**Apologies:** Linda Jennings (LJ); Ken Mortimer (KM); Dave Mottram (DM).

**1. Minutes of the last meeting**

Minutes of the last meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> May had been approved by the WG and passed to UPC. TH confirmed that UPC had approved the final version of the questionnaire at their June meeting and agreed that the WG could circulate information relating to the questionnaire in Redhorn News without prior permission from UPC if it was for information purposes only and did not involve decisions.

**All to note.**

Matters arising including the questionnaire, Rural Exception sites; Rental Properties and Locality Funding to be covered at AOB.

**2. Questionnaire**

TH confirmed that 600 copies of the questionnaire had been ordered through Colourview Print Solutions, Salisbury recommended by Mandy McDougall. The order was placed on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> June and delivery was expected by Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup>. (Post note, questionnaires delivered 28<sup>th</sup> June).

SH confirmed that a notice had been sent to Redhorn News editor for inclusion in the July copy that the NP questionnaire would be dropping through letterboxes shortly.

**Distribution:**

LJ had produced a colour coded map of Urchfont which divided the village up into sections, the method used for distribution of the last NP. WG members volunteered to distribute to designated areas including Lydeaway and Wedhampton. There are a total of 560 dwellings in the Parish which will receive a questionnaire. SH confirmed that additional copies will be available from the Village Shop, where completed questionnaires can be returned. Alternatively, people can contact any WG member for additional/return copies.

**Decision:**

- The questionnaires to be divided into designated area numbers for distribution by WG members as agreed at meeting.

**Action:**

- TH to divide and supply questionnaires to WG members.
- SH to liaise with Village Shop to arrange collection point for completed questionnaires and the availability of additional copies for parishioners as required.

**Publicity:**

WG members were shown posters produced by Mandy advertising the questionnaire and encouraging parishioners to complete and return the questionnaire.

**Decision:**

- To display these posters throughout the Parish

**Action:**

- TH to arrange posters to be displayed. RD to display one at school for information of local parents.

Mandy had also produced three publicity posts for Facebook. The first to inform people that the questionnaire was 'on its way'. The second to encourage people to 'have their say' and finally the third to be posted just before closure date (31<sup>st</sup> July) to encourage people to return their copy 'before it's too late'. WG thanked Mandy for her invaluable and continued assistance. SH thanked Two+One Graphic Design for their production of the original logo.

**Decision:**

- Agree to post on Urchfont and UPC Facebook.

**Action:**

- TH to ask Chair of UPC if she would post notices on Urchfont and UPC Facebook pages.

### **3. WC Briefing Note No. 23-15 - 5 Year Housing Land Supply**

WG members had previously received a copy of the Briefing Note and discussion followed as to its implications for the UPNP. TH stated that he raised the matter of the Briefing Note at the UPC meeting when Mr Philip Whitehead stated that, in his opinion the Wiltshire Local Plan, is unlikely to be finalised before 2025. The UPNP needs to be finalised and ready to be 'Made' at the same time as the Wiltshire Local Plan.

**All to note.**

### **4. A.O.B.**

#### **Rental Properties**

SH stated that following the last WG meeting he had looked at how many rental properties including Social Houses were in the parish. He concluded that there were in the region of 85+. Discussion followed on how this might impact on the UPNP.

**All to note.**

#### **Rural Exception Sites**

SD outlined his experience with dealing with Rural Exception Sites and the advantages and disadvantages. He believes it is something to be encouraged as it provides lower cost rental housing but relies upon sympathetic landowners who are prepared to provide land for development at low prices. Dwellings can then be built at much reduced cost. Ideally these sites should be within development boundaries but not necessarily. Covenants can be put in place to ensure that the properties remain available for rent in perpetuity.

**All to note.**

#### **Locality Funding**

SH stated that he had checked their website and there is no further information regarding available funds for making NP but will monitor.

**All to note.**

### **5. Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> July 23 in the Village Hall commencing 7.30pm

**All to note.**