



DRAFT Minutes of the Urchfont Parish Council (UPC) Full Council Meeting held in Urchfont Village Hall on Wednesday 5th October 2022

Present: Councillors: Botham (MB – Chairman), Hollyman (MH - Vice-Chairman), Turner (MT), Bamber (SB), Holt (SH), Rotherford (JR) and Gibb

Members of the Public (for all or part of the meeting): Mr. A Everett, M. R Thomas, Mr. Bill Donald, Mr. L Hooper, Mr. & Mrs Houlden, Mrs B Potter, Ms J Halliday, Dr E Ahlquist, Mrs M Kemp

A. INTRODUCTION

- 1. Welcome by the Chairman** – the Chairman welcomed all councillors and members of the public to the meeting.
- 2. Apologies:** Cllrs. Rotherham (PR) and Moscrop (PM)
- 3. New Councillor Applications** – BL reported that although he had sent out application forms to three individuals several weeks ago, none had returned them or sought further information.

B. PLANNING – See Separate Minutes

C. OCTOBER COUNCIL MEETING

- 1. Declarations of Interest** – None were made at the meeting
- 2. Time set aside for Public Participation and External Reports**

Mrs Potter made the following comments:

- i. Cemetery Gate** – despite adjustments in the past, the Cemetery Gate is sticking sufficiently to stop some people being able to gain access. MB confirmed that further repairs will be initiated ASAP.
ACTION: FC/41/22 - MB
- ii. Village Hall Car Park** – Mrs Potter said that she had been very upset and astounded that as a blue badge holder she had been stopped from parking in the Village Hall car park for the Jubilee event. She had received comments from others who have visited other events such as Scarecrows that they would not be coming again if sufficient disabled parking is not made available. SB commented that several councillors had attended the Jubilee event. She also said that management of the limited parking available in the Hall grounds had to be controlled and that people had apologised to Mrs Potter on the day. SH wondered whether more disabled spaces should be designated in the Hall car park. MB agreed to talk to the Village Hall Committee on this subject.
ACTION: FC/42/22 - MB
- iii. Celebrating the Jubilee** – Children in the Village have always been presented with a memento of significant Royal events such as Jubilee celebrations. The children received nothing this year to celebrate the significant Jubilee celebrating the reign of Queen Elizabeth II. She suggested that the Parish Council should seriously consider providing a memento to all children to celebrate the coronation of King Charles III. MB agreed that the Parish will be consulted on this issue as well as the Jubilee memorial.
ACTION: FC/43/22 – MB

Mr. Whitehead (As a resident) highlighted the following:

- i. **Missing Gateway Sign in Crookwood Lane** – one gateway was damaged by persons unknown quite a while ago, it needs to be replaced.

ACTION: FC/44/22 – MB/BL

- ii. **Recreation Ground Gate** has collapsed and needs repair

ACTION: FC/45/22 - SB

- iii. **Crookwood Lane Verges** - are being damaged by large vehicles in the main accessing the Hales Farm Development, this is also happening on Top Green. UPC should request reinstatement from Acorn Property Group when works are complete.

ACTION: FC/46/22 – MB/MH

Pyracantha Bushes at the entrance to The Orchard

Mr. Thomas summarised his presentation (See full presentation along with email from Mr. D Myers attached at Appendix IV on website version only) for removing the two Pyracantha bushes from the entrance to The Orchard, his summary covered the following:

- Questions over the changed UPC decision at the August 2022 meeting
- Sparrow habitat
- Seeking Official documentation on road junctions and visibility splays
- When the bushes were planted
- Near misses
- Reducing the height of the bushes as opposed to removal
- Request to UPC to remove the bushes

MB moved directly to Agenda Item 12.

Sewage capability to cater for new housing required by the Neighbourhood Plan

Mr. D Byford expressed concern that local sewage facilities in particular may not be able to cope with increased housing in the Parish, he has tried to get information from the water company responsible but they would not comment. PW stated that utility companies have a statutory responsibility to supply and provide adequate facilities whenever and no matter how many houses are built.

Telephone Box

Mrs Kemp recorded a huge vote of thanks to the local school, sewing, craft and gardening clubs for facilitating and supporting displays in the telephone box.

3. Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 10th August 2022 (No meeting held in September)

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
To approve and sign the minutes unchanged as a true and accurate record of the meeting	MB	MH	AGREED with one abstention due to absence from the last meeting

4. Action List Status Review and Update Reports from the Minutes of the meeting held on 10th August 2022 – as most of the outstanding actions were recent and ongoing, BL asked that this review be deferred to the November meeting. This was agreed by the Chairman.

5. Finance

a. Financial Statement and Bank Reconciliation as at 30th September 2022 – BL reiterated comments in his written report that the accounts are in good order and that the second instalment of the PRECEPT had been received from Wiltshire Council. He requested ratification of the August and September spend profile contained in the bank reconciliation which had been distributed to all councillors prior to the meeting along with the Financial Summary as at 30th September 2022.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
To ratify the list of individual payments made during August and September 2022 as shown on the Bank Reconciliation Statement	MB	MH	AGREED unanimously

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

a. Clerks Report – BL reiterated the fact that the external audit of 21/22 accounts and Governance had been completed without observation by P K F Littlejohn LLP. He also confirmed that WC had approved the Asset of Community Value application in relation to The Lamb Inn, this will be valid for a period of 5 years until 2027. He had also received the ROSPA report on the Children’s Playground just before the meeting, he will distribute this to all councillors.

b. Councillor reports

i. Meeting to discuss a Jubilee Memorial – nothing extra to add

ii. Councillor Roles and Responsibilities – SB offered to help JR with the allotments role. MB stated that in the absence of any other comments as requested on the proposed listing, that this listing will be ratified with immediate effect as an amendment / addition to the current listing.

iii. Meeting of Neighbourhood Plan Working Group – nothing to add

iv. UPC Highways Report – although a written report had not been submitted, MH noted that the Parish Steward has been extremely busy in the Parish filling potholes, clearing pavements and other areas of straw and other rubbish. BL noted that the Steward contacts him before each visit to discuss potential works.

7. Urchfont Pond – Dr Ahlquist, who lives in Urchfont and now oversees the Pond with MB, gave a presentation on the blue-green algae problem which has been evident since 2018 and despite considerable efforts to eradicate still exists today. He has identified a potential solution used in North America which uses aluminium sulphate (alum) solution followed by an application of aquatic chalk. Providing the pH of the water is maintained between 7.5 and 8.5 and the carbonate hardness is above 100 milligrams per litre the no harm is done to aquatic animals or plant. His tests have shown that that these conditions always apply to the Urchfont Pond. As a result of tests DR Ahlquist recommended dosing the pond with 50 kilograms of aluminium sulphate from a boat with outboard motor to disperse the solution. On the same day add 2 tonnes of aquatic chalk to the surface of the pond. Mainstream Fisheries Ltd have provided a quote for this work of £2000 including all treatment materials. A contingency of £1000 may be necessary to remove excess fish if this is identified after the water clarification treatment, although herons and other wildlife might may provide a natural solution.

MB thanked Dr Ahlquist for his detailed presentation and recommendations.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
To propose a budget of £2000 to undertake the works proposed by Dr Ahlquist	MB	SB	AGREED unanimously

8. Community Shop – Bill Donald, assisted by Maria Kemp, gave a briefing on the status of the Shop – see Appendix V attached to these minutes (on website version only).

Councillors then asked questions and made comments as follows:

SH commented that the shop layout and facilities look much better now.

MT noting that the Shop has £18K in a deposit account, asked how much reserve is held. Mr. Donald stated that the Shop generally makes around £1K per year.

JR asked how many Urchfont residents use the Shop, Mr Donald said that this is not monitored.

JR asked whether email marketing is used. Mr. Donald responded that the Shop currently uses Facebook but

he will take the email idea back to the Committee.

MH asked whether the proposed toilet re-location will be available to the public. Mr. Donald said that it would not be generally available but would be allowed in some circumstances (e.g. contractors working in the pub or other special requests)

PW congratulated the Shop on the provision of excellent artisan bread.

9. Japanese Knotweed – MB reported that the site in Old School Lane, which had been reported by UPC and residents to WC, had been wrongly strimmed by a Ringway operative. PW said there is no excuse for strimming and had dealt with Ringway on the issue, WC have subsequently correctly treated the area. Eradication takes a long time after treating, as evidenced by the marked site in Stonepit Lane. MB indicated that sites will be included in the UPC Highways Survey review along with any other sites that are identified.

ACTION: FC/47/22 – MB/MH

10. Devizes Gateway – SH provided an update on this proposal as follows:

The Strategic Outline Business Case has passed examination and now Network Rail are spending £300,000 investigating the next stage of the Restoring Our Railways process.

A meeting was held at the railway line crossing at Wedhampton on 9th Sept. Network Rail were there in force together with myself (SH), a member of the Devizes Development partnership, Charlotte Hill-Baldwin and reps from Wiltshire Bridleways Association.

There was a discussion about the impracticability for horses and riders using the crossing as there are 4 gates to traverse the rail track in total! There was a discussion about moving the crossing, which SH suggested UPC should support. Network Rail would rather close all railway crossings but I (SH) said UPC would likely object.

There was also discussion about the proposed Gateway Station. It has been moved so that it wouldn't be sited at the end of the Etchilhampton airfield but rather adjoin the airfield which is on the other side of the railway. Early stages but the station, car and cycle park would be on our side of the track with a footway over to the other side together with 2 lifts.

SH has scaled the proposed site off an OS map and it would be about 1.6 miles from the centre of Urchfont.

Network Rail are now taking the proposal forwards. There will be a lot of consultation as they want to get agreement from residents and landowners. They feel that 2029 is still achievable, if it gets a final approval.

Personally SH feels we should welcome this proposal. UPC will need at the least to improve walking and cycle routes from Urchfont to the A342. WC will need to provide safe access from the A342 for walkers cyclists and cars.

PW commented that it is all important for bicycle access from Devizes to be as much off road as possible, Urchfont needs to consider such routes as well. He also noted that Etchilhampton and Stert will suffer from negative impacts of the Gateway proposal and will need to be considered by WC protective measures.

11. Farmers Field – see report at Appendix II (on website version only) – BL commented that the removal of the large gate (now stored alongside the container storage) made a mockery of the No Dogs Allowed notice which is posted on the small gate entrance and allowed access for non authorised vehicles etc., is the gate going to be reinstated. MB agreed to speak with Mr. McDonald.

ACTION: FC/48/22 - MB

12. Bushes at the entrance to The Orchard – Having considered this matter further, received an email from Mr. David Myers (See Appendix IV on website version only) and listened to arguments raised under Public Participation above, the Council had reconsidered this matter and made the following proposal:

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
To revert to the original proposal made by MB and agreed at the meeting on 10th August 2022, namely - To approve a budget of up to £250 for the removal of bushes from The Orchard	MB	MH	AGREED unanimously

13. Update on Current Issues not covered by above agenda items

i. Playground Shelter – SB reported that the roof has finally been repaired.

ii. Vehicles Parked Unreasonably in The Orchard = An email had been received from Mr. David Myers (see Appendix III on website version only). MB had visited The Orchard earlier in the day with little sign of the extended number of vehicles mentioned, MH will look at it further but noted that UPC has no enforcement powers. PW noted that parking even on pavements is difficult to police and enforce, unless licensing or other road traffic regulations are being broken (e.g. not taxed or insured). There may be planning contravention if a commercial operation is being operated from a private house in The Orchard, he asked for details to be sent to him and he will have WC check.

ACTION: FC/49/22 – BL

(Post Meeting Note: Details sent to PW on 9th October 2022)

14. External Meetings

MH reported that PM had attended the LHV (previously CATG) on 4th October and had reported the following:

- The UPC proposal to make the south east entrance to Wedhampton a 'no exit' junction was approved.
- The proposal to make Wedhampton a 20mph zone requires a speed limit assessment at a cost of £2500 with UPC contributing 25% (£625) – to be considered at November meeting.
- The proposal to provide a dropped kerb in The Croft at the entrance to the allotments / cemetery will require UPC to contribute 25% of the cost (£375) – to be considered at the November meeting.

ACTION: FC/50/22 - BL

PW commented that if UPC put forward proposals to LHV then it should be assumed that they will have to contribute 25% of associated costs.

PW also advised that the 50mph zone from Stert through to Lydeway on the A342 has been approved will be implemented shortly.

15. Other Reports from Councillors

Naming of Hales Farm Development - BL advised that he had received a proposal from Acorn Property Group today regarding approval of road and house names for the Hales Farm development. Strictly speaking this should be deferred until the next meeting for a decision unless councillors are prepared to consider this proposal at this meeting. Councillors were content to have an initial discussion.

Plot	Name/Number	Street Name
1	1	Hazel Green
2	2	Hazel Green
3	3	Hazel Green
4	4	Hazel Green
5	Fern House	Hazel Green

6	Sage Cottage	Hazel Green
7	Meadow Cottage	Hazel Green
8	Olive Barn	Hazel Green
9	Willow Barn	Hazel Green
10	Myrtle House	Hazel Green
11	Juniper House	Hazel Green
12	The Laurels	Hazel Green
13	Jade House	Hazel Green

Subsequent debate concluded that the proposed road name of Hazell Green is acceptable, although councillors wondered why this name had been chosen. SH stated that he is fundamentally opposed to house names being imposed on subsequent owners, just house numbers should be used. Others commented that if numbered houses just differentiated affordable housing stock from the rest, that this was not considered acceptable. It was suggested that Acorn should be asked to consider numbers for all houses, with names in addition as proposed. They should also be asked to reconsider using the house name 'The Laurels' because the name is used elsewhere in the Parish.

Proposal	Proposer	Secunder	Resolution
BL to write to Acorn Property Group seeking use of numbers for all houses in addition to house names for some, also to seek re-naming of The Laurels. Response to be considered for ratification at the next meeting.	MB	MH	AGREED unanimously

ACTION: FC/51/22 - BL

16. Items for Future Agenda

JR requested that Use of First Responders be on the November agenda.

There being no other business the meeting finished at 8.55pm

Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 9th November 2022 - 7.00pm Village Hall (Conference Room)

a. CLERK'S REPORT

i. Finance – Copies of the Financial Summary and Bank Reconciliation at 30th September 2022 will be distributed to all councillors prior to the meeting. The accounts are in good order. The accounts have been updated to include all approved amendments to the budgets made at the August meeting.

The second Precept instalment of £26,781.01 was received from WC on 25th September 2022.

You will note that an increased payment of £222.56 has been made to Clearbusiness for electricity charges compared to previous monthly payments of less than £40. Having investigated, this is because all previous charges have been made on an estimated basis whereas the latest charge is from an actual reading. Having requested installation of a smart meter some months ago which has not been actioned, I have now reiterated that request so that monthly charges are more realistic and up to date in future. I am awaiting an installation date. The good news is that at the last renewal of this supply contract I negotiated a fixed price which remains current until September 2024.

ii. Completion of the 2021/22 External Audit – I have just been notified that PKF Littlejohn have completed their external audit of our accounts and governance certification for 2021/22, their certificate states the following:

"On the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met."

iii. Assets of Community Value – The application to renew the Wiltshire Council classification of The Lamb Inn was submitted to WC and acknowledged by on 23rd August 2022. We await their formal response.

iv. Councillor Vacancies – There are now two vacancies following the recent resignation with immediate effect of Cllr. David Stevens. Three individuals have expressed interest but to date I have not received any completed application forms.

v. Children's Playground – The annual ROSPA safety inspection of this facility in the Recreation Ground is scheduled to take place during September 2022. A full report will follow.

Bob Lunn, Clerk to the Council

b. COUNCILLOR REPORTS

i. Meeting to Discuss a Jubilee Memorial

Present: Cllrs Mark Botham, Sarah Bamber, Malcolm Turner

The group discussed a number of ideas for a permanent memorial to mark The Queen's Platinum Jubilee – They were:

- Planters on Pond Green
- Another memorial rock
- Sundial on Top Green
- Bench on the permissive path to Oakfrith Wood
- Memorial clock on the village hall.

The general consensus of opinion was that the residents must be part of the ideas and decision making process. Input should be driven by both Redhorn News and Facebook articles and allow people to contribute their own ideas or to indicate support for one of the above.

Cllr Mark Botham

ii. Councillor roles and responsibilities update September 2022

Following Dave Stevens' resignation from the council his responsibilities need to be redistributed across the remaining councillors. The following is a draft proposal to achieve this.

Allotments - John Rotherford

Cemetery - Helen Gibb

Social Media – Pam Moscrop

Christmas Lights – Mark Botham and Martyn Hollyman

Liaison with Candles Round the Pond – Mark Botham

Liaison with the Tennis Club – Martyn Hollyman

Liaison with Scarecrow – Mark Botham

Liaison with Duck House etc – Malcolm Turner

Liaison with the Cricket club – Simon Holt

Please let MB know before the meeting on Wednesday 14th if you are unable to fulfil the suggested roles above

Cllr Mark Botham

iii. Meeting of Neighbourhood Plan Working Group 5th September 2022

Present: Cllrs Mark Botham, Simon Holt

Apologies: Malcolm Turner

Matters arising

- Martin Hollyman has had to leave the group due to other commitments that he now has.
- At the last UPC meeting the council accepted that 8 social housing units should be included in the plan revision. Using the guideline that 30% of housing units on a development of 5 or more houses should be social houses the total number of houses to be built from now to 2036 is 27 of which 19 should be market rate housing.
- Before the number can be put to Wiltshire Council for ratification work needs to be done to determine if there are sites for 27 new houses in the Parish
- SH will prepare an article for Redhorn News inviting people to come forward with parcels of land. It will be made very clear that participation in the survey is totally unrelated to any possibility of indicating planning consent for those sites and at this stage is simply an exercise to validate if the plan number of 27 housing units is feasible / determine what number is possible.
- SH and MB will investigate the benefit of employing a planning consultant funded up to £10K by Wiltshire Council.

Cllr Mark Botham

UPDATE REPORT ON FARMERS FIELD – submitted by Michael McDonald

Ash felling going very well, especially as the woodland floor has been covered with nettles and cow parsley that has hampered operations slightly over the Summer, as well as a few people being on holiday e.g. Martin Follet sailing in the Med, Pete in Greece and Jeff was away for one session learning how to sail. As I might have mentioned before, the more ash that has come down the more we are realising that there is a lot more non-ash that we originally thought. Hitherto we just had "ash, ash, ash" on our tiny minds and although we knew there were birch, oak, beech, sycamore and hazel it was only as the ash was being removed that we saw how much more there is. This is great news of course as it means less trees to take down, less new trees to plant and also greater diversity. We think that there are only about 50 more ash to fell so we should have it finished by the end of this year.

I'll be re-introducing myself to the few tree suppliers I contacted earlier in the year with a view to ordering the replacement trees, now that we are nearing the traditional tree planting season. We have created plenty of space now to plant the first phase of 25 trees, maybe more.

Like last year, we have ordered the chipping machine for two days in late-September to make inroads in to the mountain of branches and brush we have. The chipper was very successful last year so hopefully so again.

We have a keen new recruit - Tim Hardingham. He lives adjacent to FF in Walnut Close and has been to our last two sessions. He has back problems so cannot do log shifting or heavy labour so I'm going to ask him to take charge of our "secondary" issues. Whilst myself, Pete, Jeff, Martin, Max et al fell ash, shift logs and drag branches around we need someone to take over the secondary jobs, such as fettling the dead hedges, cutting off ash suckers, keeping the path clear, mowing the grassy areas and digging out any brambles that appear. I think he'll like the task: whilst we deal with the ash he can just pootle about at his leisure doing diverse jobs.

Parking in The Orchard - Email received from Mr David Myers

I know I've written on this subject before but feel it needs to be raised again, as the problem has worsened.

Andrew Cridland now appears to have SEVEN vehicles! Three are on the drive at no.8 The Orchard, which is fine, but there are usually two parked in the turning-area at the end of the close, and two parked in the bay outside numbers 2-4. The white van in the turning-area is undriveable, having had the front removed several weeks ago.

With this space now blocked, large vehicles, such as oil tankers, cannot turn, so are forced to reverse blind all the way down the road, into The Green, whilst parents and children going to and from the school walk along, and traffic passes.

The postman has to park on the pavement, as do delivery drivers, and trades people working at any of the properties, requiring pedestrians to walk in the road, sometimes very near to the junction with The Green, from which many drivers swing into the close, without slowing.

Whilst the number of vehicles owned by anyone is not the concern of the Council, I believe that when they are parked on the road, creating potential hazards, it should be.

Once more, I would ask UPC to involve itself in this matter, which impacts beyond just the confines of The Orchard.

*Regards
David Myers*

APPENDIX IV TO OCTOBER 2022 UPC MINUTES

Presentation by Mr. Royston Thomas at the Meeting regarding bushes at the entrance to The Orchard

Introduction.

1. The original decision to remove the two *Pyracantha* bushes at The Orchard road junction taken at the last parish Council meeting in August had a majority of 7 with one abstention. Some of us wish to know what evidence was given after the public meeting to overturn a 7 vote majority and why wasn't this properly debated and minuted during the public meeting? To quote the minute of the evidence given post meeting "*MT expressed concern with the proposed removal as these bushes are a haven for house sparrows to nest*" This was apparently sufficient evidence to overturn a majority of 7. This seems to some of us, an indication of a lack of proper debate and decision making with no thought being given to the wider picture and the important aspect of road safety. I know of at least one resident, who can't be here tonight, who has written separately to the PC expressing serious concern about the way this decision was taken.

2. On the matter of food and habitat for sparrows, it isn't disputed that the bushes have some habitat value. However, I can confirm my long hedge alongside the pavement offers perfect habitat and has a very healthy population of sparrows all year round. Many people who walk by comment to me about this. The *Pyracantha* bushes which are now well over 2.5 metres tall and wide offer only a limited habitat and are now just too big and in the wrong place.

3. After the draft minutes of the August meeting were published, I wrote to Wiltshire Council Northern Highways asking what official documentation covered road junctions and visibility splays. Despite receiving an acknowledgement and subsequent chasing, I still haven't had a reply, though I do know that Wiltshire Highways was in touch with the PC on this matter. This irked me to say the least, so I did some research of my own. I found a document on the Transport Research Laboratory website called "Manual for Streets" (TRL report 661). This document is still current (though now subject to revision later this year or next as MFS2) and is still widely accepted as "the bible" for designing residential highways. Most Highways Departments in England and Wales either quote it as their own design guidance or have their own in house versions. Councillors will have seen the extracts from TRL 661 that I sent to The Clerk. These extracts give technical guidance on the design of visibility splays at road junctions. You may be glad to know that I don't propose to get into details! In a nutshell, the junction does not comply with the guidance given in TRL 661 about road users being able to clearly see other traffic. It really is common sense and about removing risks. If a road traffic accident were to occur as a result of visual obstruction by either of these bushes, I believe Wiltshire Council, the Parish Council or both could be held liable, especially now the matter has been made public.

4. It is believed the two *Pyracantha* bushes were planted by a well-meaning resident over 20 years ago. The bushes have now become a real problem for drivers exiting The Orchard as they seriously obstruct the view of oncoming traffic. I myself have had several "near misses". Several residents also commented on how many other road users seem to ignore the 20 MPH speed limit especially during the morning and afternoon school run. This makes the junction even more unsafe. Councillors will have seen the letter and petition to the Council signed by most residents of The Orchard to remove or reduce the height of these bushes to provide a clear line of sight of other traffic. In my view, reducing the height to below 1 metre will remove any habitat value and still in time cause an obstruction when they grow again. It would therefore be far better to completely remove both bushes. Possibly in time, more suitable planting can be adopted.

5. So to conclude, on behalf of the majority of residents of The Orchard and in light of the evidence, please will the Parish Council do a "U turn" by reversing their decision taken after the 12 August meeting and remove these bushes without delay?

Thank you.

Royston Thomas

Email from Mr. David Myers reference bushes at the entrance to The Orchard

I'm disappointed the September UPC meeting has been cancelled, "as a mark of respect for the Queen". I could understand if it were a social event, but it's not.

I had planned to attend, to talk about the bushes at the end of The Orchard. I will be away for the October meeting, so am having my say here.

The egress from The Orchard is completely blind from the pub direction and not much better the other way. More than once, I been forced to reverse because a vehicle has suddenly appeared whilst I'm trying to exit, as I'm so far out into The Green, there's not room for it to pass. The driver cannot give-way to me, as I'm heading from whence he's come and there's not enough width for two vehicles to pass.

It was agreed by the Council some years ago, that the bushes would be cut twice a year but, clearly, this isn't happening. I believe that their removal is the only way to prevent an accident. The fact it hasn't happened so far, doesn't mean it won't!

None of the Councillors is a resident of The Orchard and none probably ever drives here, so none is likely to have experienced the difficulty we regularly face in driving out into The Green.

I have never seen any house sparrows, nor anything else, nesting in these bushes, and I pass them every day when walking the dog. I do not consider their removal to be "a serious loss of habitat and source of food ...". There are 'some' berries there now, but this is a once-a-year occurrence, for a very short time. I fail to see how this should take precedence over giving better and necessary vision for motorists.

The 'concern' raised by MT was, no doubt, considered during the discussions but, clearly, the majority felt that the removal of these bushes was justified on the grounds of road safety, and voted accordingly. I don't believe it is right, or even has any validity, that a decision taken at a properly constituted public meeting should subsequently be overturned outside of that meeting. The decision was to remove the bushes and that should stand.

I would like to know, please, that this will now proceed without further delay.

*Regards
David Myers*

APPENDIX V TO OCTOBER 2022 UPC MINUTES

Briefing by Mr. Bill Donald on the Urchfont Community Shop

Thank you for having us this evening, just to say this is not a presentation rather an informal update. Maria and I will be happy to field any questions.

In 2013 the Neighbourhood Plan ran the first of 2 public questionnaires. The public were asked "What are the most important things to preserve in the Parish".r.: . What do you think was top of the list? The Pond and the Greens

The 2nd most important was the Village Shop & Post Office

In the 2nd Questionnaire they were asked: "Which of the following facilities do you think could be identified for improvement, expansion or protection in the Neighbourhood Plan?" The Village Shop was top of the list by a considerable margin.

The shop is a non-profit making organisation, but we need to make a surplus in order to re-invest and enhance the important asset of the Parish.

The shop particularly relies on 2 things

- o Volunteers to run the shop!
- o Customers to fund the shop!

VOLUNTEERS:

Pre COVID we had around 70 volunteers. We currently have 41 (two signed up last week) as well as 3 students. We need to fill 26 volunteer slots each week, many do double shifts.

We reduced our opening hours last year from 8:30 opening to 9:00, only because, by dovetailing with Mary the post mistress we were able to significantly reduce our timetable of slots. Interestingly we only lost one regular Newspaper order

SALES

During peak COVID, sales were very buoyant up over a third, this made trading in 2021 and the early part of 2022 very challenging as people gradually returned to their old shopping habits.

While during the 1st 3 months of this year sales were down by about 20% during the last 6 months sales have grown by circa 10% on last year.

This has been achieved on the back of falling Newspaper sales over the past few years in line with National trends...trouble is very few customers who come in for their paper buying other things at the same time...something we're trying hard to encourage.

Now that we're in a period of very high inflation, the managers are adjusting prices on a daily basis. Furthermore, wholesalers are increasing their prices on price marked goods without increasing the marked price thereby further reducing our profit margin. As a result the 10 % increase may be flattering.

We have a new Committee and a new Management Team.

We were keen to build upon the sentiment from the Neighbourhood plan as we felt the shop was well overdue some refurbishment.

This has included:

- Making the shop more accessible by adjusting the footprint
- Maximising the limited space available to make merchandise more visible and accessible
- Making the shop visually more attractive and providing a more a welcoming interior

Last year we invested £2,500 in changes which would have been much greater had we not achieved many of these changes without free volunteer labour. The changes have included:

- a new more efficient fridge, and removal of 3 others
- new window shelving and window sign
- new LED lighting
- new awnings
- new card and magazine racks
- new table for bread

We've introduced a new role, that of Duty Manager. We now have 5 duty managers who are responsible for opening and closing the shop. This reduces the work load on the management team and has resulted in a reduction in salary costs. But perhaps more importantly it shares the responsibility of running the shop giving an enhanced feeling of community ownership.

We've started to develop new lines to gain more interest, for example:

- Fresh artisan bread twice a week, more than doubling bread sales per week
- New crisp ranges
- New range of Sandwiches, increase from 5 to 30 a week
- New fresh pies, pasties, scotch eggs
- Christmas and Easter Hampers
- Local cold meats and sausages
- Apple Juice from Urchfont Apples (this year's stock has just arrived)

Running costs are always foremost in my role as treasurer. After salaries electricity is the single biggest cost. As part of our changes already mentioned, we've reduced our consumption on a monthly basis by about 20%. But with costs forecasted to more than double next year we will be facing tough times ahead.

What of the future?

- While we can work hard at reducing costs, many are beyond our control
- We will need to review salaries.
- With the squeeze on household income, we need to look at our values and continually review supply sources.
- Attract more volunteers - there is no desire to reduce opening hours further but without volunteers it might be impossible.
- Improve the offer to attract and keep customers
- Welcome constructive feedback and act upon it where possible

To run a successful shop, we need stockroom space.

Currently:

- this is outside the main shop at the furthest end of the outbuildings.
- It is difficult to access for many of our volunteer, especially in the winter
- It has to be air conditioned in summer to stop the chocolate melting!
- It's just not efficient Our Plan is to:
- relocate the staff toilet to the outbuildings adjacent to the front door
- relocate the stockroom to the current toilet Our progress to date on this:
- We have provisional agreement with Wadworth Brewery, the owners
- On advice from Wiltshire Council, we are about to submit a "Listed Building Consent application".
- If we get consent, we may be coming back to you with a funding request!!

In conclusion, without increasing our sales the shop will continue to struggle.

There is a phrase which is very apt...USE IT OR LOOSE IT. If the community truly values its Community Shop, then it must support it.

Hopefully this year we will breakeven, but without sales growth next year the shop may start to rely on its reserves which can only last for a short while.

