



DRAFT Minutes of the Urchfont Parish Council (UPC) Full Council Meeting held in Urchfont Village Hall on Wednesday 13th December 2023

Present: Councillor's: Bamber (SB – Vice Chair), Hill (TR), Gibb (HG), Holt (SH) and Rotherford (JR)

Councillor for Urchfont & Bishops Cannings: Apologies

Members of the Public (for all or part of the meeting): Eric Ahlquist, Nicky Hammond

A. INTRODUCTION

1. **Welcome by the Chair** – SB welcomed all to the last Council meeting of 2023.
2. **Apologies:** Cllrs Pam Moscrop (PM), Shears (SS) and Rotherham (PR). Cllr Whitehead (PW)

B. PLANNING – See Separate Minutes

C. DECEMBER FULL COUNCIL MEETING

1. **Declarations of Interest** – None declared at the meeting.
2. **Time set aside for Public Participation and External Reports** – Nicky Hammond reiterated her concerns about flooding outside her house which is made worse by large tractors churning up the verge and also by a permanent spring underneath. SB agreed to visit, take photos, report on the MyWiltshire App and add it to discussion points with the Highways Engineer post-Christmas.

ACTION; FC/88/23 - SB

3. Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 8th November 2023

PROPOSAL	Proposer	Seconder	RESOLUTION
Approved and signed unchanged as a true and accurate record of the meeting.	SH	HG	AGREED, one abstention due to absence

4. **Action List Status Review and Update Reports from the Minutes of the meeting held on 8th November 2023** – BL confirmed that he had distributed a copy of the updated outstanding action list to all councillors prior to the meeting. BL asked that councillors review the list and send him any updates.

ACTION: FC/89/23 - ALL

5. Finance

- a. **To receive a Financial Statement and Bank Reconciliation as at 30th November 2023** – BL confirmed that the Financial Summary and Bank Reconciliation had been distributed to all councillors prior to the meeting. The accounts are in good order, but as the financial year progresses it is important to progress any projects to ensure predicted spend is achieved. In response to a question from JR, BL confirmed that he is looking at potential bank deposit options which would generate more interest. BL then asked councillors to ratify the November spend details which appear on the Bank Reconciliation statement.

PROPOSAL	Proposer	Seconder	RESOLUTION
To ratify all individual payments made during November 2023 as shown on the bank reconciliation statement.	TH	SB	AGREED unanimously

b. Setting the 24/25 Precept Requirement – BL largely reiterated the statement made in his Clerk’s Report this month as follows:

In the past, apart from last year, he prepared indicative budgets to help facilitate Council decision making on PRECEPT submission. However, it has become very clear that decisions taken are based largely on the likely percentage increase in UPC PRECEPT that councillors believe they can justify to the electorate. This in turn is largely dependent on what projects the Council might wish to take forward, running and fixed costs remain largely the same each year apart from inflationary increases. On this basis, and once the WC data on PRECEPT criteria (expected mid-December), he intends to distribute an analysis of the impact of a range of percentage increases on the current Council Tax levels. The WC deadline for submission of the agreed PRECEPT is 18th January, this decision will need to be taken at the UPC January meeting when the issue can be considered further.

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

a. Clerks Report – repeated attempts to attract new recruits via Redhorn News, Facebook and the website is not meeting with success, this is not a new situation and is a situation experienced by other parish councils locally. The view was expressed by councillors that trying to get community members to volunteer is far from easy, especially the younger age group, we need to make the Council more attractive and /or engage in face-to-face encouragement of likely candidates. JR volunteered to consider wider options and an action plan; this was accepted.

ACTION: FC/90/23 – JR

Three new litter bins had now been delivered for Wedhampton, the Recreation Ground and footpath to Planks farmyard. It was agreed that installation arrangements should wait until after Christmas when volunteers can be identified, TH and SB stated that he will assist.

ACTION: FC/91/23 – TH / SB

b. Councillor reports

i. Urchfont Community Shop update – no further update or clarification required.

ii. Request from Friends of Farmers Field – TH confirmed that there is no cost involved in this request which is made out of courtesy. A qualified hedge layer will undertake the work. Consensus indicated that this work should proceed.

iii. ROSPA/Recreation Ground Update – SB was disappointed that agreed works promised by PR had not been completed to date, she expects this to be undertaken before Christmas. TH reiterated the need to take care placing contracts with councillors, BL confirmed that if any work is so assigned then declaration / conflicts of interests must be made when relevant councillors are present at a meeting.

iv. Proposed Parish Noticeboard Update – SB confirmed that she is still waiting to get together with the Chair of the Shop to agree criteria, she will update at the next meeting.

7. Urchfont Pond Update – Eric Ahlquist, who oversees the Pond on a day-to-day basis, gave an update on the current algae situation and outlined a proposal designed to eradicate the problem. A summary of his presentation is attached at Appendix III on website version only, a more comprehensive version has been distributed to all councillors to better facilitate decisions at a subsequent meeting. Eric confirmed that all of the proposals satisfy Environment Agency requirements and guidance.

SH questioned whether the electricity supply at the pond is adequate for the proposals and also whether a borehole can be switched off to prevent overflow. Eric suggested that the electricity is adequate, and that the borehole specification will be drawn up with such issues in mind. JR emphasized the need to minimize water wastage. TH suggested that a public consultation process would be advisable before any proposals are finalised.

SB thanked Eric for his comprehensive presentation. Councillors should read the comprehensive report and be ready to discuss further at the January meeting.

ACTION: FC/92/23 - ALL

8. Speed Indicator Signs on the B3098 – JR had spoken with Martyn Hollyman who suggested that BL had all the paperwork relating to the purchase, BL said that he may have some copies, but that Martyn had interacted directly with the company and placed the order. Martyn and JR had subsequently collected the equipment from the supplier, what paperwork changed hands on that occasion? Having spoken to Geoff Potter, JR believed that a battery box may be missing from the equipment supplied.

9. Reintroduction of Speed Watch – SB reported that PM had contacted Wiltshire Police who indicated that a new application process would need to be followed, this included the need for a traffic survey. PW had previously indicated that surveys conducted when the 40mph zone was introduced may be sufficient, but this will need to be verified. BL confirmed that only two persons had expressed interest in volunteering. To be discussed further at the January meeting.

10. Urchfont Parish Neighbourhood Plan See latest WG minutes at Appendix II on website version only. SH confirmed that the public meeting in early November had been well attended and generated some additional food for thought to be considered by the WG. The Group is close to producing aims and objectives. It was noted that two members of the Group are stepping down shortly and so there is a need to try to gain new members ideally from a younger age group. TH commented that there is also a need to gather wider views than just from Urchfont Village, the Plan covers the whole of the Parish including Wedhampton and Lydeaway. Further public consultative meetings will be held in due course, but any other ideas for attracting comments and views from the wider Parish would be welcome. Maybe PM and SS could consider this further.

ACTION: FC/93/23 – PM/SS

11. UPEG – Contrary to current perception, SH suggested that there is still a keen interest in this WG which would benefit from increasing the membership. A further update on progress will be presented at the March 2024 meeting.

ACTION: FC/94/23 - SH

12. Wildflower Planting – SH expressed the view that everyone wants such planting, but very few want to get involved in planting and maintenance. Enquiries in The Orchard and Walnut Close met with a nil response, offers from local plant suppliers have not produced results. SB wondered whether any allotment holders or members of the gardening club might be interested in taking an active role, maybe SH could enquire.

ACTION: FC/95/23 - SH

13. CIL funding from Hazel Green Development – BL reported that he had submitted an application for funds to the WC Section 106 Department on behalf of UPC (for works on the pathway to Oakfrith Wood – Invoiced at £7800) and the School (for the pathway to the School invoiced at £9000) on 19th November 2023. Supplementary questions had been satisfied and an indication had been given that funds will be made available in due course, although amounts had not been mentioned. The element relating to the School is being dealt with first. A formal response is awaited. TH commented that he understood that the Section 106 agreement included £14k which could be allocated to the Parish, £5k of this specifically earmarked for the school project.

It was pointed out that Hazel Green appears to have changed to Hazel Grove without any reference to the Parish Council, BL to check approval route with Acorn.

ACTION: FC/96/23 – BL

(Post meeting note: A rather confusing response has been received from WC on 15th December which indicates that some Section 106 funding will be approved but it is unclear on how much and to whom. BL has responded seeking clarification, a response is awaited.)

14. Crookwood Lane Lay-By – The Chair has written to Acorn developments about the poor quality of repairs by contracted utility companies. They subsequently asked for before and after photographs which were supplied. A response is still awaited.

15. Wedhampton Defibrillator – awaiting report from the supplier as to what is wrong with the machine, Anthea Donald is progressing. In the meantime, a mobile defibrillator is held by the First Responder in Wedhampton.

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

- i. **Foxley Field Notice Board** – SH asked what progress had been made on purchasing this item, BL responded that he would try to action soon after Christmas / New Year.

- ii. **Farmers Field Bus Stop** – SH reported that now the road markings had been completed, he had approached WC to replace the missing bus stop flag. However, because of perceived risk in mounting a new flag, WC are reluctant to re-provide or install a new flag.
- iii. **Overhanging Bush obstructing 20mph sign in Crookwood Lane** – JR reported that this had still not been removed. TH agreed to speak with the owners of the property involved who have a legal responsibility to remove anything obstructing a public highway.

ACTION: FC/97/23 - TH

- iv. **Pavement opposite The Lamb** – no further update on getting WC Highways to review the task, SB will highlight to the Highways Engineer on behalf of TH.

ACTION: FC/98/23 - SB

- v. **Tree to be felled at The Croft** – TH reported that this is scheduled to be felled on 14th December. (Post meeting note: this work has now been completed.)
- vi. **Blocked drains in The Paddock** – TH reported that whilst blocked drains have been addressed by the gulley cleaner, interconnecting drains remain blocked and could cause flooding. This needs to be recorded on the My Wilts App and followed up with the Highways Engineer.

ACTION: FC/99/23 – TH/SB

17. External Meetings – None reported.

18. Other Reports from Councillors – TH reported that he had met with Brian Taylor (Redhorn News) who was still concerned about the requirement to undertake a survey to ascertain how many households still required a hard copy magazine delivered. He did not feel that Redhorn can do this. Maybe we need to consider alternative methods, possibly via the Annual Parish Meeting in 2024.

(Post Meeting Note: The agreed contribution from UPC to Redhorn of £1600 has now been paid)

19. Items for Future Agenda – a proposal from Urchfont Cubs to locate a lifeline at Urchfont Pond.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.30pm.



*Wishing all in
the Parish a
very Happy
Christmas and
all the best for
2024*

**Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 10th January 2024 - 7.00pm Village Hall
(Conference Room)**

APPENDIX I TO DECEMBER 2023 UPC MINUTES

a. CLERK'S REPORT

i. **Finance** – Copies of the Financial Summary and Bank Reconciliation on 30th November 2023 will be distributed to all councillors prior to the meeting. The accounts are in good order.

ii. **Setting the PRECEPT 2024/25** – In the past, apart from last year, I have prepared indicative budgets to help facilitate Council decision making on PRECEPT submission. However, it has become very clear that decisions taken are based largely on the likely percentage increase in UPC PRECEPT that councillors believe they can justify to the electorate. This in turn is largely dependent on what projects you might wish to take forward, other running and fixed costs remain largely the same each year apart from annual increases. On this basis, and once I have received the WC data on PRECEPT criteria (expected mid-December), I intend to distribute an analysis of the impact of a range of percentage increases on the current Council Tax levels as I did last year. The WC deadline for submission of your agreed PRECEPT is 18th January, this decision will need to be taken at the UPC January meeting.

iii. **Outstanding Actions** – An updated action list will be distributed to all councillors prior to the meeting.

iv. **Councillor Vacancies** – The Council currently has THREE vacancies.

v. **New Litter bins** – three new litter bins with ground anchors have now been delivered for installation in the Recreation Ground, Wedhampton and at the start of the footpath to Planks from Crooks Lane. I need to identify some volunteers to install these.

Bob Lunn, Clerk to the Council

b. COUNCILLORS WRITTEN REPORTS – None submitted to date

i. UCSA Report December 2023

The works at the community shop have now been completed. The toilet has been relocated into a previous unused area and is now outside of the shop which is more hygienic. Although it is technically a 'staff' facility, the shop does allow members of the public to use it if asked. The new stock room was officially opened at the end of October by Peter and Jane Cook who cut the ribbon, and a glass of fizz was enjoyed by the members of the Committee and all those who had helped to bring the project to fruition, all of whom gave up their own time to decorate and install new fittings and flooring, which greatly reduced the costs. Thanks once again to UPC for their contribution to the works, and we are pleased to say that the project has come in on budget. The new stock room area is easily accessible with ample shelving, a second storage freezer and there is no longer any need to go outside to access stock, which is very much appreciated by the volunteers, especially with the current weather conditions.

A new online rota system came into operation in September and has been very successful. The much appreciated rota mangers have been 'retired' and the new system is working very well with volunteers selecting their own sessions.

Christmas stock is selling very well, and the Christmas raffle is back (spend £5 or more and you get a free raffle ticket to win a hamper of Christmas goodies). Both sales and profits are steady.

We are all looking forward to a successful 2024!

Cllr Sarah Bamber

ii. Request from Friends of Farmers Field

I have received the following request from Michael McDonald, Friends of Farmers Field.

The Friends of Farmers Field seek permission from UPC to 'lay' the mixed hawthorn hedge at the Eastern end of Farmers Field. The 'hedge laying' will be carried out by Martin Follett who is a qualified hedge layer and has carried out similar work at Oakfrith Wood. There will be no cost implications for UPC.

Cllr Trevor Hill

iii. ROSPA/Recreation Ground Update

Payment to Playdale for the inspection of the equipment was made on November 22nd; I contacted them last week for an update. They have confirmed receipt of the payment and will be back in touch with me first week of January to arrange an inspection date for early in the New Year.

A new bin has been ordered by Bob and will be installed once it arrives.

The repairs to the seating and picnic benches have been undertaken by Pete, and the seating in the shelter has, once again, been secured after yet more vandalism.

I haven't contacted the pressure washing company as yet, but will do so once the inspection has been carried out.

Cllr Sarah Bamber

iv. Proposed Parish Noticeboard Update

I have asked Bill Donald to meet with me at the shop car park to agree a location for this and take measurements. I have researched three suppliers who would be able to manufacture a suitable noticeboard for us.

- (1) The Parish Noticeboard Company info@parishnoticeboards.co.uk 01606 871188
- (2) Green Barnes sales@greenbarnes.co.uk 01280 701093
- (3) Noticeboards online info@noticerboard.com 01539 628309

We need to establish if three quotes will be required for this project.

I understand that a noticeboard is an 'advertisement' for the purposes of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. In principle, therefore, the erection of a board accordingly requires consent under the **Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007** so planning permission will probably be needed. We may also need consent from the brewery as they are the freeholders of the land, as well as consent to erect the board within the curtilage of a Listed Building, I am hoping that Simon will be able to give advice and assist on these issues once size and location have been agreed.

Cllr Sarah Bamber

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE NP WORKING GROUP ON 28 NOV 23 IN URCHFONT VILLAGE HALL

Present: Debbie Carr-Jones (DCJ); Trevor Hill (TH); Simon Holt (SH); Linda Jennings (LJ); Dave Mottram (DM); Sally Stephens (SS)

Apologies: Stuart Davies (SD) Rob Dolan (RD) Ken Mortimer (KD)

At this stage LJ reported that she had received a note of resignation from Ken Mortimer (KD) to take effect immediately. The WG recorded a note of thanks to Ken for his contribution to the Group and wished him the best for his work with the Urchfont Scarecrow Committee.

1. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the last meeting held on 24 Oct 23 had been approved by the WG and passed to UPC.

There were no significant matters arising. The outcomes from Item 2, the presentation, are discussed at Item 2 below.

2. PRESENTATION 4 NOV 23

The first public meeting on 4 Nov concerning the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) was very well attended with over 60 parishioners. Presentations were made on a brief description and purpose of Neighbourhood Plan, on affordable housing and on the results of the first questionnaire. There followed discussion on 3 topics:- views on the issues facing the Parish; the relevance of the existing UWLNP objectives and the meaning of “large development”.

A) Points to address for the next meeting

- smaller groups for any discussion sessions
- at least 2 sessions for each public meeting
- careful selection of the date for the next public meeting
- finding ways of engaging younger parishioners

It was recognised that those attending the public meeting were the older residents of the Parish. There was some discussion on how to engage younger residents, especially those in the 30-40 age bracket whose future would be influenced by the NP. It was agreed that any future publicity should be particularly aimed at younger residents and various suggestions were made about engaging with their different groups. It was felt that on-line publicity and questionnaire completion would be useful whilst publishing a timescale for the stages of Plan production would be helpful for residents. Whilst Facebook was one medium used by younger people, it was agreed that online engagement and distribution of information was extremely important.

NB. It was agreed that the existing NP section of the UPC website was in need of revision and development to reflect the current situation. Members of the NP WG were happy to undertake this task.

Decisions:

- It was agreed that parents of the Scouts, Urchfont School PTA, teenage scholars and person to person contact would be useful as means of engaging younger residents

- Online interaction with younger residents should be developed and the help of UPC was necessary
- The next questionnaire should include a box for residents to record their age bracket - optional to complete

Actions:

- SS would liaise with the Scouts organisation
- RD would seek engagement with Urchfont School PTA
- SH would liaise with the scholars at the bus stop
- All WG members, through personal contacts, would encourage younger residents to get involved with NP production

B) Outcomes from discussions

LJ had circulated the notes made during the feedback from the discussion groups. It was agreed that whilst some new issues had been raised, many of those identified previously in the UWLNP were still current - such as the need for small sized homes, for affordable housing, the protection of community facilities, the local countryside, green spaces and village character, the protection and enhancement of employment facilities and traffic movement. Similarly, many of the existing UWLNP objectives were still considered relevant though the list should be reordered. The meaning of “large development” varied, but the WG felt that there was a general consensus for any number over 10.

Decision:

The issues and objectives feedback from the public meeting needed to be consolidated into a workable list

Action:

SH and LJ would consolidate and refine the issues into a list which would serve as a reference for building objectives; the list would be sent round to WG members, for comment, before Christmas.

C) Wider publicity

SS raised a point about the apparent focus on the village of Urchfont, although the Plan concerned the whole Parish. There was discussion about the need for separate engagement with the residents of Wedhampton and Lydeaway to ensure they had a say in the NP process.

Decision:

Further research was required to establish the views of those living outside of Urchfont village.

Action:

SH would speak to Bill Donald, resident of Wedhampton, to seek his views on local engagement.

3. UPNP AIM / VISION

LJ had circulated a note from resident Peter Newell which stressed the need for an overarching aim/vision for the UPNP and included suggested wording. TH had sent a note to WG which included a suggested Aim. SD had also circulated a suggested Aim. The 3 submissions were discussed and it was agreed that the leading statement should be an “Aim” rather than a “Vision”.

Decision:

An “Aim” would be developed for the UPNP

Action:

SH and LJ would consider the suggestions put forward and produce a meaningful Aim to head up the UPNP; then send this to WG members for comment

4. OBJECTIVES

Also see Item 2 above. TH had circulated a list of objectives based on the probable subject headings in the UPNP. Having established the issues which were of concern to residents, work could start on formulating the UPNP objectives.

Decision:

Work on the objectives should start and that they should be linked to subject headings in UPNP

Action:

SH and LJ would consider the objectives in the existing UWLNP, the new issues raised by residents and the suggestions of TH, then draft a set of objectives for the UPNP - to be circulated to WG members before the next meeting.

5. SA/SEA FUNDING

DM reported that it had been difficult to access and complete the requisite forms but the problems had been resolved with a telephone call. The Locality representative had confirmed that his company would be contacting AECOM who would be doing the Appraisal Assessment work. There needed to be contact between UPNP WG and AECOM to start the process before a formal bid for funds could be made to the Government. (DLUHC)

Decision:

It was agreed that contact between NP WG / Locality /AE COM should be initiated with a view to seeking funding and assistance with SA/SEA production

Action:

SH and LJ would contact Locality and AECOM to set up a meeting to discuss the information required NP Assessment before the next WG meeting

6. DEVELOPMENT SITE MATRIX

It had been agreed that a site matrix was needed to assess the relative merits of individual development sites. It was felt that the assessment matrix used for the sites in the previous UWLNP would be a good starting reference.

Decision:

It was agreed that work should start on the design of a site assessment matrix

Action:

DM, TH and SS would work together to produce a draft development site matrix and circulate it to other WG members for comment before the next meeting

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

8 NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on 30 Jan 24 in the Village Hall commencing 7pm.

All to note.

Summary of Eric Ahlquist's presentation for UPC minutes

Eric Ahlquist did a presentation on the current state of the pond and a proposal to rid the pond of its algal problems.

The ducks are a popular feature of the village, but every day they, and their wild cousins, poo in the pond. Duck poo and sunlight create the ideal conditions for algal growth.

For much of the last two years the dominant organism has been a variety of the blue-green alga Planktothrix which is harmless to humans and animals. However, other varieties produce dangerous toxins and it is impossible to predict when such an organism might appear in the pond.

Our other problem is the annual summer appearance of the red alga Euglena sanguinea. These organisms get tangled up with each other and create a brown/orange scum which is harmless but looks terrible.

Over the last four years various treatments have been applied to try and get rid of the algae and while most have been beneficial to the ecology of the pond, they have not solved the problem. There is no other simple solution to be tried out.

The pond is a closed system and the only water that goes in is rainwater and top-ups from the hydrant by the duck house. Any nutrients that go into the pond stay there – if one algal cell dies and breaks up, the nutrients it contained are quickly gobbled up by other algae.

We have used a lot of potable water from the hydrant in the last twelve months and although we pay for it, the water industry is encouraging us to conserve water and we can't assume that Wessex Water will continue to extend this facility. If that were the case the pond would dry out in a prolonged drought (as has happened before).

If we had a source of fresh water going into the pond plus a new pond drain, we would be able to flush out the algae and the nutrients and eventually the pond would become clear. Also, the water level would remain constant.

To do this we could either extract water from the stream which runs from Bratchels Lane towards the water recycling plant or we could sink a borehole next to the pond. Long-term residents may recall that there was a borehole close to the pond before the Manor Farmyard Estate was built.

In Eric's opinion, the borehole option is likely to be simpler to implement and be of greater longevity than building an extraction system from the stream.

Eric Ahlquist