

DRAFT Minutes of the Urchfont Parish Council (UPC) Full Council Meeting held in Urchfont Village Hall on Wednesday 8th September 2021

Present: Councillors: Botham (MB - Chairman), Hollyman (MH – Vice Chairman), Bamber (SB), Turner (MT), Holt (SH), Rotherham (PR)

Clerk to the Council: Lunn (BL)

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

Members of the Public (for all or part of the meeting): Mr. G Day, Mr. T Hill, Mr. R Hawkins, Mrs Coleman, Mr. Coleman (Son), Mrs Whitehead, Mrs Holt

A. INTRODUCTION

1. Welcome by the Chairman – MB welcomed all to the meeting and stated that on this occasion masks would not be required but could be worn if individuals wished to do so.

2. Apologies: Cllrs Moscrop (PM) and Stevens (DS)

B. PLANNING – See Separate Minutes

C. SEPTEMBER FULL COUNCIL MEETING

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

2. Time set aside for Public Participation and External Reports – Items 10 and 11 were actually brought forward (but minuted below according to the agenda, so that members of the public wishing to speak on these topics could do so at the start of proceedings).

3. Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 14th July 2021 (No meeting held in August)

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
To APPROVE and sign the minutes unchanged as a true and accurate record of the meeting.	SH	MH	AGREED unanimously

4. Action List Status Review and Update Reports from the Minutes of the meeting held on 14th July 2021 not covered as separate agenda items below – BL stated that outstanding actions will be reviewed at the October meeting.

5. Finance

a. To receive a Financial Statement and Bank Reconciliation as at 31st August 2021 – BL confirmed that the financial summary and bank reconciliation had been sent to all councillors prior to the meeting and, as stated in his Clerk's written report, the accounts are in good order. He re-iterated that, as we are now 6 months into the new financial year, it is necessary to consider requirements for new projects to ensure that allocated funds are spent in year. No questions were asked by councillors.

b. Update Pond Operating Budget – MB stated that to date reliance has been placed on funds brought forward from FY20/21, it is now time to make available the pond operating costs of £1380 stated in the budget submission to facilitate ongoing maintenance of the pond. He made the following proposal

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
To make available additional Pond Operating budget of £1380 to cover requirements in year.	MB	PR	AGREED unanimously

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

website only)

a. Clerks Report – Nothing to add to or clarify.

b. Councillor reports

i. **Liaison with Urchfont Community Shop** – Nothing to add to or clarify

ii. **UPC Highways** – MH commented that his report made sad reading due to the broken promises and lack of action by the WC Highways Engineer. The issues will now be escalated to higher WC management. SB noted that elderly and infirm residents are now walking in the road rather than on uneven pavements. PR asked whether residents could fill potholes outside their property, MH responded that unfortunately this will transfer liability from WC to the resident in the event of an incident. PW advised that the relationship with the Highways Engineer should be maintained recognising that he has to balance priorities throughout his area of responsibility. PW went on to say that reports of pavement and road issues should be reported on the My Wiltshire App, this in itself transfers current liability to WC.

iii. **Urchfont Pond Update** – MB confirmed that the latest treatments had been successful, although some slight discoloration might be seen on some days dependent on the weather

iv. **Visit to Urchfont Primary School** – Nothing to add to or clarify

v. **Farmers Field** – Having taken over as lead for this facility, PR commented that users have probably increased ten fold during the past 12 months. Ash dieback is being continually monitored and some additional thinning may be necessary. PR informed councillors that the current ride on mower is on its last legs and would require significant expenditure to maintain. He had identified a suitable second hand replacement which he recommended should be purchased / serviced, although there is no guarantee included. The old mower will be sold as scrap to help to fund the new purchase.

Proposal	Proposer	Second	Resolution
To seek a net budget of up to £500 to purchase and service a second hand ride on tractor with required attachments	PR	MB	AGREED unanimously

7. Environmental Event – MB stated that the intended and published event on 18th July has now been postponed to 20th November 2021 so as not to coincide with a memorial service in the village which a lot of people will want to attend. All surveys covering the whole of the Parish have now been completed by the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust (Wild Landscapes Team), their report is awaited which will be fully publicised at the November event.

8. CPRE Best Kept Village Presentations 26th September – BL confirmed that the presentation ceremony for the Laurence Kitching 'Winner of Winners' competition will take place between 11.10am and 12 noon on Sunday 26th September 2021 in the Village Hall grounds. Light refreshments will be available, all are welcome to attend.

The presentation programme is as follows:

Welcome to guests	Anne Henshaw, Chairman Wiltshire Branch CPRE
Unveiling of Standard & Shield	Mrs Sarah Troughton, President Wiltshire Branch CPRE and Lord-Lieutenant for Wiltshire
Presentation of The Laurence Kitching Award Plaque	Mr. Owen of Princeton Homes, sponsors of the award
To be received by:	Bob Lunn, Clerk to the Council
Presentation of framed CPRE Certificate	Sir Charles Hobhouse Bt., High Sheriff of Wiltshire
To be received by:	Mark Botham, Chairman of Parish Council
Presentation of memorial tree	Miss Carly Paoli, CPRE Wiltshire Countryside Ambassador
Vote of thanks	Mark Botham, Chairman of Parish Council

9. Submissions to CATG – MH reported that submissions had been sent to CATG regarding the following, but noted that he next meeting is probably not until November:

- The requirement to make the south east access to Wedhampton off the B3098 entrance only, with a no exit sign on The High Street just after the last property.
- Slow sign(s) to be painted on the road at the Redhorn Hill cross roads on the B3098 to minimise the risk of

accident.

PW reminded councillors that CATG works on eight priorities at any one time, this may mean that the above could take a while to be included.

10. Pathway to Oakfrith Wood – MB introduced this proposal submitted by a member of the public / resident (Mr. Whitehead) which is reproduced at Appendix II to these minutes (on the website only). He invited Mr. Whitehead to explain the key points in the proposal.

PW emphasized the following points made in his proposal:

- That the metal vehicle / pedestrian kissing gate, which now exits onto the new lay-by, was the only access to/from the playing field before the pathway to Oakfrith Wood was implemented. Historically the gate was not easy to access but now affords safe access a distance away from the highway (Crookwood Lane).
- The bank access from the pathway to the school driveway did not exist before the new path was fenced by WC prior to handing it over to the Parish Council (UPC) by CAT. UPC is allowing this bank to be used and worn away by the public, with dangerous access on to the school driveway which is well used by vehicles around effectively blind bends both ways, in winter and bad weather the bank becomes even more dangerous because of the mud.
- Section 106 monies have now been negotiated through the approved Hales Farm development to facilitate the building of a new path from the Oakfrith Path to the school within the playing field, this should be accessed via the metal gate not up the muddy bank.
- Because the bank access exists, people currently avoid using the safer metal gate access point to the pathway, school and playing field facilities.
- PW proposed that the bank entrance should be fenced off forthwith to safeguard children and other members of the public.

Mr. Graham Day read out the following statement: "I wish to object to the proposal for the following reasons:

1) Misleading introduction – the proposer says 'The end of the path where it meets the driveway to the school is no longer fenced off' and 'Historically this end point was fenced off.' I would refer councillors to the UPC website page archive section which has a full history of the creation of the pathway to Oakfrith Wood. This states '1st September 2014 - Having agreed final details with Wiltshire Council, work has now started on the new permanent public path (rather than permissive as now) to Oakfrith Wood running from the start of the School driveway at Cuckoo Corner, along the Crookwood Lane side of the Playing Field and through the two fields to a new entrance into the Woods in the northern corner. The path will be bounded by stock proof fencing so that dogs, children and adults will be able to walk freely to the Woods.' On 10th October 2014 there is the following instruction 'Please use the new permanent path which can be accessed from Cuckoo Corner / Crookwood Lane.' On 9th September 2015, land ownership of the pathway was transferred to UPC which is now responsible for maintenance and operation of the path. From all this it is clear that the pathway was created in 2014 and intended to be open from the end at the school driveway (Cuckoo Corner/Crookwood Lane) to the woods.

2) General Comments - I repeat the minuted comments I made to the 8th April 2020 meeting of UPC because they are relevant today. 'GD questioned why PW had suggested closing the end of the Oakfrith pathway, this is not part of the lay-by project. To his knowledge no one else had suggested closure of this entrance, indeed he regularly sees many people accessing the path by this route.'

I urge all UPC Councillors to reject this proposal comprehensively."

Mr. Richard Hawkins confirmed that he had sent an email to UPC on 7th September 2021 which was distributed to all councillors prior to the meeting – See Appendix III (on website only)

Mr. Trevor Hill stated that he had issues with some of the comments made by PW today and in his proposal. He expressed concern that having agreed UPC decisions back in April 2020, following proposals from Geoff Potter to create a graded path from the new lay-by, PW had raised procedural objections which resulted in UPC agreeing to delay a decision on the pathway. At that time PW suggested UPC should engage more with the public which was facilitated via a survey resulting in 45 responses all rejecting the proposal to close the end of the path. PW again raised objections which would only be withdrawn if UPC disregarded the results of the survey. Mr. Hill went on to describe what he had seen whilst working at the tennis club recently. 26 vehicles were parked in the lay-by with a lot of traffic on Crookwood Lane. One pedestrian with a double buggy went up the bank at the end of the footpath, if this had been closed off she would have had to walk along Crookwood Lane to access the metal gate through parked vehicles. Additional traffic will use this stretch of road when the Hales Farm development is completed. MH pointed out that several emails had been received and distributed to councillors prior to the meeting expressing / reiterating concerns over the proposal to close

the end of the path – see Appendix III (on website only).

PW responded by saying that the person with the double buggy will have already had to negotiate the dangerous Cuckoo Corner, the safe metal gate is only a short distance further on than the muddy bank. Extra cars in the lay-by is probably because the school are also using it whilst building works continue. He reiterated his view that the metal gate is the only safe way to the pathway. Contrary to the point made by GD, exit down the bank is on to the school driveway not Crookwood Lane. He had objected to the public survey because the documents indicated that the proposal had been made by him as a councillor, when it had actually been made by him as a resident. In addition one of the survey notices was placed on the bank, it should have also been displayed on the metal gate to facilitate a more balanced view by users. He agreed that such issues and associated decisions are always difficult when trying to balance views, but he believed that safety of pedestrians was paramount.

MH expressed the view that UPC should make a decision tonight.

PR suggested that the bank could be improved with steps and/or a proper slope for buggy's and wheelchairs, PW countered this suggestion by stating that it would not remove the safety concerns of direct access on to the school driveway.

Mrs Whitehead commented that she sees children exiting via the bank every day whilst having no appreciation or awareness of the dangers facing them from vehicles, parents appear to be unaware also. The Head Teacher at the school has similar concerns. Motorbikes and bikes also use the bank to access the path, an additional hazard.

SB expressed concerns that, whether using the bank or the metal gate(s), maybe this presents an accident waiting to happen scenario due to the close proximity of and need for pedestrians to use of the driveway or Crookwood Lane. There are no pavements. BL confirmed that use of safer routes for pedestrians to access the school, cricket ground and Oakfrith Wood was investigated in consultation with WC and the public at the time of the sale of Urchfont Manor in 2013. No real solution was agreed in the absence of pavements, but fortunately the new owners of Urchfont Manor agreed to the use of a permissive path through their property to the cricket ground and beyond.

Proposal	Proposer	Secunder	Resolution
To vote on the proposal (Appendix II) made by a resident to close off the end of the Path to Oakfrith Wood where it exits onto the School driveway.	MB	MT	PROPOSAL NOT SUPPORTED 4 votes against the proposal + 2 abstentions

(Post Meeting Note: Following on from the meeting a number of councillors reflected on the safety of the bank at the end of Oakfrith Wood path which gets slippery in the winter . In light of this and the comments made in person or by email by residents to the meeting MB has subsequently asked BL to seek advice on improving the slope.)

11. Update of Neighbourhood Plan – Mr. Richard Hawkins was invited to speak. Mr. Hawkins said that he was not going going to say much as councillors should have all received and read his email regarding the issues (See Appendix IV on the website only). He hoped that the email makes councillors realise that there are some very important issues to consider, if and, when the Plan is updated. He questioned whether it is worth updating the Plan? Wiltshire pick and mix from it to suit their requirements which is often not what the community wants. Whatever happens, management of the update must be open and transparent and importantly always involve the whole community – particularly regarding decisions. He expressed the view that there are many in the Community who have lost confidence in the original Plan both in its management and its ability to produce what they wanted – particularly lower cost houses.

MB stated that he has been giving a lot of thought to this issue and has come to the conclusion that UPC should revise the existing plan, not start a new one. He stated that he will be putting proposals forward to the next meeting but in summary:

- There should be fewer people on the review team, membership to be carefully considered and transparent
- SH and Mr. Dave Mottram to give the presentation on lessons learned that was agreed by UPC last year
- BL to police the process to ensure all is transparent
- All meetings are to be minuted and published
- Progress is to be reported at every FC meeting
- All members of the review team will sign a specific code of conduct, breach will have consequences
- Draft Terms of Reference will be proposed at the October meeting

ACTION: FC/33/21 - MB

SH made a prepared statement as follows:

- The UWLNP was made in April 2017 following a positive vote of virtually 90%
- The Plan was most widely consulted of any of the 30 or so neighbourhood plans read, 187 parishioner's voted for or against sites and this equated to 25% of decisions. This was the first time parishioner's had the chance to vote rather than just talk about sites
- The Plan has started to reverse the trend of building 4 or 5 bedroomed houses. 23 have been built in the last and next decade with 2 or 3 bedroomed houses plus two bungalows.
- 9 affordable homes have been built or are consented to with the UWLNP plan requiring affordable homes on sites only half the size which WC would have required.
- The Plan has been instrumental in ensuring planning applications comply with the number and size of properties built, together with the number of affordable homes. The sites in the Plan were the most popular sites voted on by parishioner's and they also passed a very strict site assessment designed by the Steering Group. Any published design statements attached to planning applications refer the Plan policies which their plans conform with.
- The UWLNP has protected 11 green spaces in the Parish and included a detailed design statement which has influenced planning consents delivered during the Plan period to date.
- Mr. Hawkins has made 3 referrals of the UWLNP to WC, all of which have been refused. A 'lessons learnt' presentation will be made to UPC which it is felt will be a lot more positive than reviewing the Plan word by word looking for mistakes.

Mr. Hawkins stated that in his view the real problem with the existing plan is that the community was misled, no realistic minutes were produced / published and there was a lack of transparency in decision making. We are now being given the same old story and excuses, at this point Mr. Hawkins quickly left the meeting.

SH commented that Mr. Hawkins has consistently ignored him for a long time over this issue. SB commented that we should now be looking forward, not focussing on the past and history apart from learning lessons.

PW commented that planning is invariably a very contentious subject that has caused break up of entire councils and numerous friendships in the past. He believed the current UWLNP to be an excellent document, views expressed are probably correct but divisive. The Plan must be revised to avoid any possible issue as a result of the 2 year view on outdatedness.

12. Speeding in Urchfont – MB stated that he intended to organise a public meeting later in the year to clarify identify and judge the extent of perceived issues on this topic. MH suggested that this might include a survey to better judge wider perceptions on each of the topics. PW commented that past metro-counts in the Village had confirmed that the speed limits (20mph) are being largely adhered to.

ACTION: FC/34/21 - MB

13. September Surgery – the first surgery was attended by Cllrs MB, MH and MT. Two residents requested appointments and raised the following topics:

- Overhanging trees and shrubs in Friars Lane and The Bottom – Highways have already been asked to address this issue, especially where plots of land are unoccupied.
- Conversion of a barn at Sunnyside Farm into residential accommodation – advise was given to contact WC Planning to ensure planning criteria is fully met.

14. Monitoring Ash Dieback – MT published a monitoring report for 2021 on the 7th September 2021 which has been copied to all councillors. This followed the recommendations in the March 2020 Tree Survey which identified 27 ash trees on UPC owned / managed land. An extract from the summary indicates that the vast majority of the trees are still in good condition, with a few showing little, or only very minor, thinning of the canopy. Remedial work to some of the 'Parish' trees was conducted up until the end of May 2021. However in some cases, dead twigs and thin dead branches were still present on some ash trees. There were no obvious large dead limbs on any ash tree at the time of the September 2021 assessment.

PW asked whether he could have a copy of the 2020 Tree Survey Report, it was agreed that BL should provide a copy.

ACTION: FC/35/21 - BL

15. Assignment of Unattributed Actions - BL suggested and it was agreed that this be deferred to the October meeting.

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

i. B3098 40mph Buffer Zone – PW commented that he had not heard anything further but as there had been no objections or comments during the consultation period, he expected implementation to be undertaken shortly.

ii. Approved new litter bin for Wedhampton – BL reported that this has now been received, arrangements will be made to install it in the agreed location.

17. External Meetings – None reported

18. Other Reports from Councillors – None Reported

19. Items for Future Agenda – None at this point in addition to those highlighted above.

Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 13th October - 7.00pm Village Hall (Conference Room)

The next Surgery Date will be published on the website in due course.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.42pm.

a. CLERK'S REPORT

i. Update on Clerk's actions from July 2021 Meeting

FC/26/21 – Make donation to Wiltshire Citizens Advice – Payment made and thank you letter received
FC/29/21 – Make case to CATG regarding Wedhampton entrance – Case put to CATG by Cllr. Hollyman

ii. Finance – The Financial Summary and Bank Reconciliation as at 31st August 2021 has been distributed to all councillors prior to the meeting with this agenda. Requirements for new projects need to be identified and funding approved. The accounts are in good order but this early in the financial year it is not possible to indicate the end of year reserve at 31st March 2022 with accuracy.

iii. Co-option to fill vacancies – At the time of writing I have received no further applications or expressions of interest.

iv. CPRE Laurence Kitching Award Presentation – The presentation at the Village Hall will take place between 11.10am and 12 noon on Sunday 26th September 2021. Light refreshments will be available. The presentation programme will be as follows:

Welcome to guests	Anne Henshaw, Chairman Wiltshire Branch CPRE
Unveiling of Standard & Shield	Mrs Sarah Troughton, President Wiltshire Branch CPRE and Lord-Lieutenant for Wiltshire
Presentation of The Laurence Kitching Award Plaque	Mr. Owen of Princeton Homes, sponsors of the award
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Presentation of framed CPRE Certificate	Sir Charles Hobhouse Bt., High Sheriff of Wiltshire
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Presentation of memorial tree	Miss Carly Paoli, CPRE Wiltshire Countryside Ambassador
Vote of thanks	Mark Botham, Chairman of Parish Council

Bob Lunn, Clerk to the Council

b. COUNCILLORS REPORTS

i. LIAISON WITH URCHFONT COMMUNITY SHOP (UCS)

UPC Quarterly Report – September 2021

The previous UCS Committee stood down on the 24th July at the AGM, which had been postponed from 2020 and earlier in 2021 due to covid restrictions. The meeting was very well attended with over 40 people turning up on the day.

Financial statements and accounts were presented to the members present and approved.

A new Committee has now been elected, which has the full requisite of eight members. Bill Donald has been voted in as the new chairman, with David Myers appointed as Treasurer. The other six members are Sarah Bamber, Mary Craddock, Nicky Hammond, Maria Kemp, Mally Kimber and Liz Turner.

Following Patty Frankel's resignation as Manager earlier this year, Anthea Donald and Stephanie Szakalo are managing the shop with regular assistance from a few of the key long term experienced volunteers who have stepped up to help the shop by taking on additional duties.

Meetings are now being held face to face on a regular (currently monthly) basis in the village hall. The committee are currently looking at improving the exterior of the shop layout, possible redesign of the area where the vegetables/chillers are located, and hopefully improving the aesthetic look of the area which currently is rather run down. The awnings are going to be replaced in the near future which should also considerably improve the exterior.

Focus going forward is on the sustainability of the shop, a recruitment drive for new volunteers and emphasis on how important the Community shop is to the village.

Cllr Sarah Bamber

ii. UPC HIGHWAYS REPORT SEPTEMBER 2021

Martyn Hollyman and Mark Botham had a meeting with engineer Richard Dobson of Wiltshire Highways on August 11th to review our latest six monthly highways survey. The key areas discussed were:

- The footpath running from roughly the Urchfont Dentist entrance along the High Street opposite to the pond. Richard stated that he and a colleague would be marking the pathway on Wednesday August 18th in anticipation of having it resurfaced. This was not and has still not been done as promised.
- Reinstatement of the verge and associated road repair opposite the village pond. Richard was going to source and send the cost of both heritage and ordinary white kerbstones one year ago, then six months ago and we raised this again on 11th with further promises. To date still nothing has been received.
- Richard was arranging to have the hole left on Top Green by Wessex Water to be filled. To date nothing has been done.
- Last year we were promised that all the road markings would be refreshed. This was not done, and we were then promised that it would be completed by the end of May this year but nothing was done. We have again been assured that it is on the Line Team's list and will definitely be completed this year, but to date it remains to be done.
- Richard was going to check the boundary plan at Yardlands and report back to us. We are yet to hear anything.
- The Gates Green Road sign remains wrecked despite having reported it over six months ago, and having chased its replacement three times since. We asked what progress had been made with both this sign, and also with the reinstatement of the Cartway 'No Through Road' signs, and the sign with lamp in Friars Lane which has been recently knocked sideways. To date we have still heard nothing regarding any of them.
- We discussed the overgrown foliage in Friars Lane and Richard is going to have this trimmed back in week commencing 6th September.
- Richard was going to review the full report to see if anything else could be done. Nothing has yet been advised.

Cllrs. Martyn Hollyman and Mark Botham.

iii. Pond Update September 2021

- Two Hydrogen Peroxide treatments were applied during July each of which was followed by the addition of live bacteria.
- The treatments have brought the red algae under control and the blue green algae has been reduced.
- A recirculating pump was added to the pond to increase water movement and oxygenation where the silt is at its deepest. This too has had a beneficial effect on the water quality.
- July and August have not required the use of the stand pipe and constant water input to control the algae for the first time in three years. The stand pipe has only been used to top up the pond for the Candles Round the Pond event.

- It is strongly recommended that the pond should be treated with two tons of aquatic chalk mixed with slaked lime in the winter (when the water temperature is less than 10C). This will be proposed at the October UPC meeting. The estimated cost is £1200. The treatment will turn the pond bed alkaline from its current acidic base which will foster the growth of beneficial bacteria.
- Until August the maintenance of the pond was being funded from the 2020 -2021 operating budget surplus, the advised 2021 – 2022 operating budget now needs to be made available to fund ongoing operating expenses.

Cllr. Mark Botham

iv. Report on visit to Urchfont Primary School - Friday July 16th

Attended by: Mark Botham (Chair) and Sarah Bamber

This was the first meeting between UPC and the Primary School since the new council took office in May 2021. Below is a bulleted list of key points discussed:

- **Sustainability of pupil numbers in the future.** The current number of pupils is 105, so slightly under capacity. However, this will be dropping to 97 at the start of the 2021 autumn term. We discussed the desire for more families with young children being attracted to the village, especially when considering the type of houses that are being built, and when developing the Neighbourhood Plan in the future. Although quite a few houses have been built in recent years, including Peppercombe, Blackboard Lane and more recently the development at Uphill, not many of these homes have attracted families with school age children. It is hoped that the provision of more affordable homes will improve this in the future.
- **Urchfont Community Bus.** In the past the school have occasionally used the UCB to take children in small groups to events away from the village. This has in recent years ceased to happen due to a lack of volunteer drivers from the school. We are hoping this can be resolved and drivers can be recruited for occasional journeys going forward.
- **Grants for small school projects.** We are hoping to be able to assist the school with some funding for small projects that they are keen to develop, but do not have the available funds for. Particularly those of an environmental nature.
- **Pupil involvement in new council environmental initiatives.** We discussed the possibility of children being involved in some of the UPEG initiatives that are currently being discussed within the council, specifically those around green spaces, and wildlife conservation, and whether some of the children might be involved in attending the UPEG day in village hall in September.
- **Road Safety.** Carol is very concerned about road safety, speeding and parking around both the Blackboard Lane/Top Green pedestrian access and around the vehicular access off Cuckoo Corner. Only last week a seven year old was tragically killed in an incident outside a primary school in Collingbourne Ducis. Carol expressed her desire for better signage and traffic calming measures around Blackboard Lane, Top Green and the road into the village from Potterne Wick. This is something that UPC need to discuss going forward. The aesthetic of the village needs to be balanced with road safety.
- **New Extension.** A new extension is being built at the school over the next 12 weeks. This will impact on access to the school grounds, probably into the Autumn Term. Carol emphasized that this is very much a Health and Safety issue and that she would be grateful if the UPC can make sure that this message is circulated so that there are no misunderstandings within the village.

To conclude, the meeting was considered to be valuable and all parties are looking forward to having a mutually beneficial relationship in the future. We have provisionally agreed to meet up again during the first few weeks of the new term in September.

Cllr. Sarah Bamber

v. Farmers Field

Grass cutting continuing on a bi-weekly basis. We had to stop cutting on Monday though due to a large number of baby frogs around the scrape and near to the container and sheds. I'll finish cutting over the weekend if they've moved on!

Myself and Jeff have identified a few more ash trees with dieback that will need felling in the autumn. Numbers to be confirmed but we estimate around 20 or so.

John Knight has decided to cease being an FF volunteer and has removed his wildlife cameras. A real shame, I'm not sure why but will see if he will consider changing his mind.

The rights of way group are now storing various pieces of equipment in the shipping container.

The worst of the overhanging tree branches from the lane alongside FF have been trimmed.

Cllr. Pete Rotherham

Proposal by Philip Whitehead – Crookwood House (as a resident)

Entrance off Crookwood Lane to the path to Oakfrith Wood.

The end of the path where it meets the driveway to the school is no longer fenced off allowing people to access the path at this point rather than use the gate which is situated at the centre of the parking area.

Background

Historically this end point was fenced off and access was through the gate, access was only possible through the gate and then across the recreation ground to use the path at the south of the recreation field.

When the path to Oakfrith Wood was created on the northern edge of the fields (around 2013/2014), part of the recreation ground was used for the path and then the whole path was separated from the field by the wooden fencing. At this time the fence at the end was taken down but not reinstated.

There is no advantage of using the end entrance in any aspect. It is not shorter or easier. Many people still use the gate but many, especially returning, simply walk to the end of the path and then find they have to get down the bank.

Action

Urchfont Council should consider reinstating this end fence so that access is then made through the original central gate.

Apart from returning the access to as it was, there are additional reasons that support this action.

Supporting reasons

Safety

Accident risk: The access at the end over the bank is often used by children returning from the woods who will run down and onto the school's driveway without checking for traffic. There is no control mechanism at this point, and children on bikes often come down the bank quickly, potentially into the path of a car.

This entrance is on a blind entrance from Crookwood Lane. People, having been for a walk, also congregate at this point, in the middle of the driveway oblivious to the risk.

The main gate has the advantage of restricting the speed at which children can exit through it and it is some distance back from the road. The pedestrian gate is very large and if necessary, e.g. for wheel chair access, the main gate can be opened.

Risk of a fall: At any time, but in winter months especially, the steep bank is extremely slippery after rain and is a danger. The central gate is graduated and does not get muddy. The concept of a combination of risk of falling, no restrictions and a blind bend increase the problem.

Motorbikes

The open end has allowed access onto Oakfrith Path for motorbikes at times. The gate prevents this.

Aesthetics

The photographs clearly show both the fence, but also the banking without the unsightly paths broken into them.

It does seem ironic that elsewhere in Urchfont the PC is at the forefront of reinstating damaged banks and re-grassing banks that have worn but here the removal of the fence has resulted in considerable damage to the bank. In addition, there are now new paths across the bank that have been created since the parking area was finished creating additional damage to the bank and trampling the wildflowers that were planted.

The gate at the centre of the parking areas suffers none of these problems and enters directly onto the path from the parking area

School path

Included in the Section 106 for the development of Hales Farm is a sum to allow a bound path to be laid inside the fence on the school recreation field. This will run from the gate to the recreation ground at the end of the path to the gate at the top of the school car park and allow safe access for children to the school without walking along the school driveway.

It is not logical to provide safe passage inside the school field and then allow children to run down the back on to the school driveway. By reinstating the fence the exit to the car park will be at the central gate which is set back from the road and opens onto the parking area.

Conclusion

The fence was in place until about 2013 when it was removed during the installation of the new route for the path to Oakfrith Wood.

Because the fence was not reinstated over time more people have used this entrance which has caused significant damage to the bank and is a more dangerous entrance to the path.

We now have 3 dangerous and unsightly entrances and a gate to access the path to Oakfrith Wood. We could just have well installed gate.

The PC should reinstate the fence and direct residents and visitors to use the central gate.



NOTE: Additional Google Street View pictures will be displayed at the meeting and have been copied to councillors with this agenda.

EMAILS OF REPRESENTATION ON OAKFRITH PATH PROPOSALS

SHULA KERR

We feel very strongly that this should be retained and I just wanted to reiterate our feedback from last time, as detailed below.

Kind regards,

Shula Kerr
The Granary, Cuckoo Farmyard

Dear Bob,

Thank you for seeking our views regarding the pathway to Oakfrith wood, please find a response from our household (The Granary, Cuckoo Farmyard) below.

Do you agree with this closure proposal? No.

We regularly use this short section of path to access Oakfrith Wood and the playing fields (up to twice daily at present between us) and really appreciate that we do not have to walk along the road to be able to do so. Now that the parking area is in place, we anticipate this being a busy area at evenings and weekends and therefore we feel it will be even more important to retain this access route. In addition, this access point is a lovely start and/or end to a walk for us and therefore we really would not want to lose it.

Do you believe the entrance should be improved? No.

Whilst we have no issue with the entrance in it's current state, we would be happily take advantage of any improvements that were on offer, however we see these as a nice-to-have rather than a must-have.

Kind regards,

Shula Kerr

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DAVID & HELLEN GIBB

Our views are much the same as they were last year. We see value in maintaining access from the School driveway to the Oakfrith Wood pathway, for the reasons given below (at times the new parking area is quite busy, and access to the eastern end of the path allows pedestrians, including children and walkers with dogs, to avoid the parking area). Such access would also connect with the path which may be made along the eastern side of the school field, following the school driveway. This access could be achieved either by leaving the end of the path as it is (with the option of carrying out work to improve the slope at the start of the path), or by fencing across the end of the path, but with a gate (also with the option of carrying out work to improve the slope at the start of the path).

Kind regards,

David and Helen Gibb

Sent: 09 May 2020 16:29
To: clerk@urchfont-pc.gov.uk
Subject: Pathway to Oakfrith Wood

We are writing in response to the consultation on p30 of this month's Redhorn News, about the pathway to Oakfrith Wood.

Do you agree with this closure proposal? NO

We believe that the access from the School driveway to the Oakfrith Wood pathway should remain open. Many walkers use this route. We use it frequently – usually at least daily. It is also used for pedestrian access to the playing field via the gate near that corner of the field (this gate would be made redundant if the path is blocked by extending the current fence in a straight line to the corner of the field). Whilst this first section of path is quite short, it is an attractive section of pathway lined by overhanging trees, which is preferable to using the road. Blocking this end of the path and having to use a section of road would increase the need to avoid traffic and cars parking and manoeuvring (and the amount of traffic will increase when the Hale’s Farm development is built). It is preferable for walkers to leave the road as soon as possible, especially as many have children and/or dogs.

Improvements necessary? YES

Not necessary but desirable, especially as Geoff has kindly offered to do this at no further cost.

Would you be able to acknowledge receipt, please, so that we know that you have received this?

Kind regards,

David and Helen Gibb

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RICHARD HAWKINS

Pathway to Oakfrith Wood

I sent a letter to the Parish Council dated 19th May 2020 expressing a view that the access to the pathway where it joins the school driveway should be improved. I stated ***'A simply improved access would assist those with pushchairs, buggies, wheelchairs, etc. The generous offer by Geoff Potter should be gratefully accepted.'***

Sadly, nothing happened!

I have read the statement by Philip Whitehead and must disagree that the 'central gate' is a safer option. I was nearly hit by a car reversing out of the new lay-by. It was a matter of luck that I realised the vehicle was about to reverse, they had not seen me, I had not heard the vehicle (I believe it was an electric vehicle) and if I had been a small child would probably have been badly injured or worse!

I agree that the present bank is unsightly but that is why Geoff Potter offered to improve it for easy access particularly with regard to *pushchairs, buggies, wheelchairs, etc.* The provision of an offset fence arrangement could be carried out to prevent excessive speedy access by pedestrians or cyclists.

Richard Hawkins

6th September 2021

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MALCOLM SMITH

FAO all councillors

After the proposed construction of a path was blocked by Cllr Whitehead in May 21, the matter was put to public consultation. My comments at the time are attached herewith and remain relevant.

It is clear from the well trodden path that the current path is both popular and well used. As many architects and planners have found to their cost, people tend to follow the most convenient route to their destination regardless of the preferences of those attempting to control their behaviour. It is certainly more convenient to use a gentle slope than a kissing gate or heavy 5 bar gate when pushing a buggy, for example.

During the school day, few children are likely to be using the path (they will be at school!) and outside school hours the only traffic using the school drive will be generated by the Whitehead household. It is safer for pedestrians to emerge on to Crookwood Lane from the drive where there is some semblance of a visibility splay, than from behind a parked car in the lay-by. The real safety issue is the lack of a pedestrian foot way round Cuckoo Corner!

Over the last decade the village has seen a plethora of gates, fences and prohibitive notices restricting the freedoms of residents. Please do not waste public funds on an unpopular, unnecessary, and unwanted obstacle.

Perhaps Cllr Whitehead might better represent his constituents by directing his energies to correcting the woeful inadequacies of WC Highways department as outlined elsewhere in the agenda to this meeting?

Malcolm Smith, 7 The Croft.

Begin forwarded message:

Date: 18 May 2020 at 10:11:34 BST
To: clerk@urchfont-pc.gov.uk
Subject: Path to Oakfrith Wood

FAO ALL councillors.

I am strongly opposed to closing off access to this path via the school driveway for the following reasons:

History.

The "permanent path" to Oakfrith Wood was opened on 15 October 2014 after extensive consultation with both the public and Wiltshire Council to provide safe pedestrian access to this valuable community asset, following the sale of Urchfont Manor. Full planning approval was obtained. Ownership passed to UPC on 9 September 2015.

The path has been in use for over 5 years without causing any safety issues or accidents on the school drive. The wear and tear evident after a very wet winter are testament to its popularity. The completion of the adjacent lay-by does not affect the path. Nothing has changed.

(Source: UPC website)

Safety.

The proposal to prevent access via the drive seems to be based on the somewhat nebulous (and unfounded) assumption that pedestrians crossing the school drive constitute a hazard. Surely, forcing pedestrians to walk through or past what will become, at times, when school resumes, a busy car park constitutes a far greater risk?

Disabled access.

Currently, mobility scooters are allowed to use the path.(UPC website). This is only possible via the drive, unless the 5-bar gate from the lay-by is to be left unlocked (a security issue) or a dedicated accessible gate installed (at vast expense). The same considerations apply to wheelchair users and small children in buggies. The benefits of improving the existing access slope, at no expense to UPC, are obvious and I urge the council to accept Geoff's generous offer.

Precedent.

If the council were to accede to the apparent whim of one(albeit influential) local resident, in the face of popular opposition, this would surely undermine its popular mandate, and leave PW open to accusations of exerting undue influence by virtue of his position.

Sent from my iPad

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MRS VALERIE DAY

I am writing to you in your role as Parish Clerk to object to the proposal by Philip Whitehead to fence off the path at the Eastern end of the walk to Oakfrith Wood and to force everyone to use the metal gates on the road to Potterne Wick.

Cuckoo Corner is a dangerous bend and has no pavement on either side of the road. Families with young children must negotiate this bend to access the playing field and Oakfrith Wood. They therefore need to make sure that the children are off this road at the earliest opportunity. The current path which is being used allows this to happen. By fencing off this access pedestrians are required to walk further along a road with no pavement, past parked vehicles in the layby which may be reversing onto the main road. This is a very dangerous area.

Once the metal gates are reached it is virtually impossible to get a buggy through the pedestrian gate and the gate for grass cutters is too large for single pedestrians with a buggy and toddler to open and close whilst keeping their children safe as they do so.

The area at the eastern end does become muddy in times of rain but so do other footpaths in Urchfont and residents are aware of these issues.

I would be grateful if you could read out my letter at the meeting on September 8th

Yours sincerely

Valerie Day (Mrs)

Email received from Richard Hawkins on 7th September 2021 (Distributed to all councillors prior to the meeting).

8th September meeting – Agenda Item 11

Update of Neighbourhood Plan

I sent the following email and attachment to you on 2nd November 2020 to enable the ‘then’ Parish Councillors to read my ongoing concerns regarding the management of our last Neighbourhood Plan and the way applications are dealt with by Wiltshire Council. Its contents are very relevant to the Agenda item 11 - Update of Neighbourhood Plan which is to be discussed. I wish the new councillors to have the opportunity of reading my concerns.

Failures by the Neighbourhood Plan lead councillors in making public specific information that they were instructed to do so by the Independent Examiner, and further misleading and incorrect statements to the public and other Parish Councillors is a matter for great concern. Whilst answers and clarification of who did what and why was promised in the form of steering group minutes none have ever been presented or made available.

All Neighbourhood Plans must be developed by full and open public consultation and discussion – this was not so, particularly regarding very important issues in our Neighbourhood Plan. If our Neighbourhood Plan is updated, it needs to be done with the confidence and backing of the community and with a detailed management structure in place. This needs careful consideration!

Certain members of the Neighbourhood Plan steering group requested copies of my previous email and attachments which were not at the time publicly available. I would like this email together with the attachment to be part of this meetings minutes, so they are available to all interested residents.

Email dated 2nd November 2020

You may remember that I spoke at a Parish Council meeting in February of this year regarding an erroneous paragraph in our Neighbourhood Plan that was used by Wiltshire Council during its deliberations about the Uphill planning application. I was concerned that it was unreasonable to use a paragraph that was clearly not relevant to the Policy it concerned. I wrote an official complaint to Wiltshire Council who provided no clarification on the issue and finally sent my complaint to the Ombudsman. After some months (due to Covid) I was informed that were going to investigate the complaint and the process commenced. A final decision notice was issued on 21st October stating that ‘they found no fault in the Council’s decision making process’.

I have put together a package of documents which I would like the Parish Councillors to read which includes my original complaint, further information in response to a draft decision notice and the final decision notice. I am still concerned how the erroneous paragraph came to be inserted in the Neighbourhood Plan and the manner in which Wiltshire Council are able to totally disregard serious concerns from Parish Councils and local residents. I would like the issue put on the Agenda for the next meeting.

My apologies for the length of the attachment – but I think it provides important information relevant to any debate.

Kind regards

Richard