



DRAFT Minutes of the Urchfont Parish Council (UPC) Full Council Meeting held in Urchfont Village Hall on Wednesday 10th January 2024

Present: Councillor's: Moscrop (PM – Chair) Bamber (SB – Vice Chair), Hill (TH), Gibb (HG), Shears (SS) and Rotherford (JR)

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

Members of the Public (for all or part of the meeting): Eric Ahlquist, Nicky Hammond, Brenda Potter, Geoff Potter, Anne Bouch, Liz Clifton-Page

A. INTRODUCTION

1. Welcome by the Chair – PM welcomed all to the 1st meeting in 2024 and wished everyone a Happy New Year

2. Apologies: Cllrs Holt (SH) and Rotherham (PR)

B. PLANNING – See Separate Minutes

C. JANUARY FULL COUNCIL MEETING

1. Declarations of Interest – None raised

2. Time set aside for Public Participation and External Reports – Nicky Hammond raised two issues as follows.

- Firstly, on the PRECEPT she felt that increased development in the Parish should be taken into account to minimise increases in tax because they bring in more funds and secondly she felt that WC are not doing enough maintenance to justify existing levels of council tax in terms of clearing blocked drains, repairing potholes and generally doing enough to prevent issues in the future. BL responded that new developments are taken into account in the setting of the tax base by WC and emphasized that the Council will only be discussing the Parish element of the overall council tax bill. SB stated that she will be having a meeting shortly with the WC Highways Engineer to discuss highways issues in the Parish.
- Secondly she commented on ongoing attempts to get new councillors when some existing councillors were regularly missing meetings.

3. Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 13th December 2023

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

4. Action List Status Review and Update Reports from the Minutes of the meeting held on 13th December 2023 – BL displayed the already distributed latest list of actions outstanding; the following updates were made:

TH reported that he had spoken to the owner of the property with the bush overhanging the speed sign and they had agreed to cut back – Action 97 complete.

SB reported that the Best Kept Village plaque is now displayed at the shop – Action 73 complete.

SB also reported that interactions with WC Highways Engineer will be dealt with at the upcoming meeting.

Having reviewed the listing, PM directed that all actions outstanding for more than 12 months should be removed. All councillors to review listing and advise any updates before the next meeting.

**ACTION: FC/24/01 – BL
ACTION/24//02 – ALL**

5. Finance

a. To receive a Financial Statement and Bank Reconciliation as at 31st December 2023 – BL confirmed that the financial summary and bank statement as at 31st December 2023 had been distributed to all councillors prior to the meeting and reiterated his written report that the accounts are in good order. PM reminded all councillors that VAT receipts are required for all expenditure claims. No further comments were made. BL then asked councillors to ratify for audit purposes all individual payments made during December.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
To ratify all individual payments made during November 2023 as shown on the bank reconciliation statement.	PM	TH	AGREED unanimously

b. Setting the 24/25 Precept Requirement – BL explained that he needed to submit the 24/25 PRECEPT submission to WC by the deadline of 18th January 2024. To assist councillors with their PRECEPT requirement / increase decision, BL had distributed a spreadsheet detailing the impact of 1 – 10% PRECEPT increases on Band D (currently £101.03 per annum) and Band H (currently £202.06 per annum) property local council tax annual amounts. TH expressed the view that whilst increases per annum even at 10% were relatively small (Band D - £10.10, Band H - £20.20), in the current national cost of living crisis he believed that the Council should not increase its requirement by more than 2%. Other councillors present agreed with the view expressed by TH. JR said that Council will need to very carefully consider requests for financial assistance and project funding to ensure that spending of public funds are is justified. PM anticipate that WC will increase its council tax by 3% but taking account of increasing costs faced by the community, she agreed that 2% was appropriate. BL reminded councillors that in addition to PRECEPT funds, the Council has a healthy CIL / Section 106 fund.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
To submit a claim to WC increasing the UPC PRECEPT by 2% for 24/25 (from £56,331.30 to £58,033.64).	PM	TH	AGREED unanimously
This will increase the Parish Council element of Band D property Council Tax by £2.02 to £103.05 per annum and Band H by £4.04 to £206.10 per annum)			

ACTION: FC/24/03 – BL

(Post Meeting Note: PRECEPT Requirement submitted to WC on 13th January 2024)

c. CIL funding from Hazel Green Development – As tasked, BL submitted a Section 106 claim to WC for Section 106 funding of the Pathway to the School (School placed the requirement) and upgrading of the entrance to the pathway to Oakfrith Wood (UPC requirement). A response had been received that was not clear, this was challenged, and clarification had been received which is still somewhat confusing. Basically, WC are offering two options, this will need to be claimed by UPC:

- To claim the full cost of £9000 for the School Pathway.
- To claim the amount listed in the S106 Agreement for the School Path which is only £5644.

Dependent on which option is chosen, the balance left out of the overall funds available (which is not clear from the WC email) may contribute to the UPC Oakfrith Pathway claim which has not yet been considered by WC. BL pointed out that until the School pay the contractor for their contracted works, now outstanding since October 2023, the contractor is reluctant to undertake further work for UPC in connection with the Speed Indicator signs.

TH questioned whether UPC could pay the contractor for the School work from funds received and then claim the VAT element back. BL was doubtful as the work was not contracted by UPC and the invoice is addressed to the School.

PW stated that once funds had been received from WC, UPC should pay the School to enable them to pay the contractor and reclaim the VAT. PW offered to assist UPC if there is any reluctance on the part of WC to cover the full cost of the Oakfrith Pathway work.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
To claim £9,000 from WC against scheme SC90865 – School pathway and pay to School to settle outstanding contractor invoice.	PM	TH	AGREED unanimously

ACTION: FC/24/04 – BL

(Post Meeting Note: Invoice submitted to WC on 12th January 2024)

d. Proposal from 1st Urchfont Cubs for a Lifebuoy to be placed at the pond – Following a presentation to the Cubs on the wider impacts on the community of Parliament and Parish Council activities, they had submitted this proposal. SB had reviewed letters from the Cubs making this proposal, a very positive reaction proposing a good idea if not absolutely necessary. PM agreed that this is heartwarming. It was agreed that SB should investigate the idea further and make a formal proposal at the next meeting.

ACTION: FC/24/05 - SB

e. Potential Replacement of Christmas Tree / Pond Wall Lights - TH thanked Nicky Mitchell on behalf of the Council for again organising the tree from Dauntsey's and the working parties for tree and lights. Thanks also go to Henry Bodman for collection of the tree; TH had purchased a small gift as thanks.

It is now not necessary to replace any of the tree lights, a cable connection was not working properly. However, the wall lights looped on the pond wall are very fragile and break easily in the wind – 9 bulbs have just been replaced. In addition, neighbours have commented that they are very bright. TH proposed to replace the bulbs for next year with more robust versions costing around £22.50 for a string of 10 x 8 lengths. PM asked whether on-line purchasing had been investigated. It was agreed that TH should investigate further and make a proposal in due course.

ACTION: FC/24/06

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

a. Clerks Report – no further clarification required.

b. Councillor reports

i. Proposal from 1st Urchfont Cubs for a Lifebuoy to be placed at the pond – item 5b above

ii. Campaign to recruit new Parish Councillors – JR commented that with three vacancies and lack of regular attendance of some councillors, the Council may not come across as attractive as desired to encourage new candidates. Past articles in Redhorn and Facebook have not generated expressions of interest and so a new softer image with a photo of PM is now being used to try to improve take up. JR would like every councillor to suggest who in the Community would be a good candidate and then try to encourage them to join. SB commented that she often promotes joining the council to people visiting the Community Shop. JR suggested that there is a need to publish a brief description of what the Council does, BL suggested use of the 'How we work' section on the website as a start. JR also suggested the need for an induction programme for new councillors, it is a whole new world for someone not used to the council basics. BL suggested that there are regular published training courses available via WALC/NALC, but these have rarely been taken up to date.

ACTION: FC/24/07 - ALL

iii. Potholes – JR thanked PW for his recent email on potholes, but unfortunately, he rarely sees any evidence of work being undertaken to repair quite deep potholes locally. More communication from WC is needed to keep the community informed. PW agreed, the main problem being the lack of finance, manpower and other priorities, this is a nationwide problem. The same teams of council workers are covering several roles including gritting, refuse collection, highway repair etc. PW agreed to write an article in Redhorn News on the subject. SS commented that WC is seen more widely as a good council financially. On the subject of compensation for damage caused but potholes to vehicles, PW stated that WC cannot be held liable unless the pothole had been reported prior to the accident.

7. Urchfont Pond Proposal – JR reminded councillors that Eric Ahlquist had made a presentation at the December meeting and provided a comprehensive report to all councillors on proposals likely to be in the region of £12-15k. PM commented that the Pond is a key feature of the Village which has helped win several prestigious awards. TH though the report was excellent, he asked whether proposed borehole would produce the same volume of water as the current standpipe. Mr. Ahlquist confirmed that it would provide around 19000 litre’s of water per day, drainage from the pond is likely to be more of a problem which he will check. PM thanked Mr. Ahlquist for the work he has undertaken.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
To approve further work on the proposal to generate detailed costs and program.	PM	JR	AGREED unanimously

8. Speed Indicator Signs on the B3098 – JR confirmed no progress to date, dependent on the outcome of the funding scenario outlined in item 5c above and payment of the outstanding contractor invoice by the School.

9. Reintroduction of Speed Watch Proposal – PM stated that her interaction with Wiltshire Police highlighted that further requirements need to be satisfied before they will approve the reinstatement of speed watch. One of these related to road survey metro-counts which she is expecting from PW.

ACTION: FC/24/08 – PW

(Post meeting note: survey information provided by PW on 12th January)

10. Urchfont Parish Neighbourhood Plan (See latest WG minutes at Appendix II on website version only) – TH confirmed that no meeting of the WG was held in December. The WG is currently putting together objectives, policies, and the site matrix. Wedhampton and Lydeaway (both in an area of Natural Beauty- AONB) are not represented on the WG. He asked PM and SS to seek resident views on whether they would be supportive of development. TH mentioned that Government had recently changed the National Framework which might require change to the WC Local Plan, PW was of the view that this will not impact on WC plans.

11. UPEG – see email at Appendix III on website version only – PM referred to the email from Malcom Turner which in her view contained a sensible proposition to separate form UPC so as not to inhibit progress. TH asked Liz Clifton-Page where the Group would get funding from, she believed that they would approach various funding sources in due course including the Council, Scarecrows, parish Trust etc.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
To allow UPEG to become independent of the Parish Council.	PM	SB	AGREED unanimously

12. Wildflower Planting – In the absence of SH, no further update was provided.

13. Crookwood Lane Lay-By – BL reported that he is still awaiting a response from Acorn Developments regarding the inferior reinstatement of the lay-by by their sub-contractors, PM agreed to hasten.

ACTION: FC/24/09 – PM

Chair closed the meeting for public participation.

Geoff Potter, who built and guaranteed the lay-by, stated that the surface is getting worse where utility companies have not reinstated the lay-by to the same exacting standard, he had made his displeasure known to Acorn Developments site manager.

Chair re-opened the Council meeting.

14. Faulty Wedhampton Defibrillator – PM reported that the defibrillator is still faulty, she had not received an update from Anthea Donald on repair status. In the meantime, the Wedhampton 1st Responder has a portable defibrillator on loan.

15. Three New Litter Bins – BL confirmed that three new bins and their anchorage systems had been delivered. TH offered to collect and install two of the bins, one at the Recreation ground (to replace a damaged bin) and the other at the start of the footpath to Plank’s Farm close to the end of the Yardlands development. PM offered her husband to collect and install the third bin at Wedhampton. BL will advise the UPC maintenance contractor of the need to collect from two new bins.

ACTION: FC/24/10 – TH/PM/BL

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

- i. **Proposed Community Notice Board at the Community Shop** – SB reported progress in that it had been decided not to locate this in the Shop car park but on the shop wall facing the street. She will now seek approval from Wadworth's and ascertain whether planning permission is required.
- ii. **Recreation Ground Equipment Inspection** – SB reported that the inspection had been completed by Playdale and their report received. Some remedial works are necessary, she will make proposals at the February meeting. PM suggested that maybe an application to Scarecrows for funding would be appropriate.

ACTION: FC/24/11 - SB

- iii. **1st Responders** – JR reported that we are looking for 2 more volunteers for the Parish, the responder website is now open for potential applicants. There will be a need to purchase an equipment bag for the community which cost in the region of £3k. Parish Trust have indicated that they will contribute £500, an application will be made to Scarecrows for £1.5k and UPC could be asked to contribute the balance of £1k.
- iv. **Gateway Signs in Crookwood Lane** – PW asked when new signs would be purchased to replace existing damaged signs. BL responded that, as previously agreed, he is waiting for details of whether and when the 20mph signs outside Hazel Green will be relocated to determine a better location for the Gateway signs. PW agreed to follow this up with WC Highways.

ACTION: FC/24/12 - PW

17. External Meetings – None reported.

18. Other Reports from Councillors – None reported

19. Items for Future Agenda (not identified from agenda items above) – None identified.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 8.50pm.

Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 14th February 2024 - 7.00pm Village Hall (Conference Room)

APPENDIX I TO JANUARY 2024 UPC MINUTES

a. CLERK'S REPORT

- i. **Finance** – Copies of the Financial Summary and Bank Reconciliation on 31ST December 2023 will be distributed to all councillors prior to the meeting. The accounts are in good order.
- ii. **Setting the PRECEPT 2024/25** – As explained at the December meeting, the required Precept has to be submitted to WC by 18th January 2024. I have distributed an options paper to assist in determining the level of Precept to be claimed.
- iii. **Councillor Vacancies** – The Council currently has THREE vacancies.
- iv. **New Litter bins** – I have three new litter bins to be installed in the Recreation Ground, Wedhampton and at the start of the footpath to Planks Farm at Uphill. I need volunteer(s) to install these please.

Bob Lunn, Clerk to the Council

b. COUNCILLORS WRITTEN REPORTS

i. **Proposal from 1st Urchfont Cubs for a Lifebuoy to be placed at the pond**

Earlier this year 1st Urchfont Cubs invited Pam and me along to their meeting where they were talking about Parliament. Philip Whitehead gave a talk about different levels of government, and we were all very impressed with the cubs' ideas and their engagement with the subject.

They wanted to put forward a proposal to UPC and came up with the idea of having a lifebuoy installed at the village pond. UPC received 11 individual letters from cubs stating why they thought it would be a good idea, these included:

- Keeping children safe if they fell in
- To stop anyone who fell in being in there too long and getting hypothermia
- To keep any adults safe who might fall in
- To provide a floating device
- To save lives
- To stop people drowning
- To help people who can't swim

We promised the cubs that we would discuss this at one of the UPC meetings in the New Year.

From research I gather a simple floating device costs around £40 and a full lifebuoy ring between £60 and £150, depending on mountings etc. plus costs to install.

CLlr Sarah Bamber

ii. **Campaign to recruit new Parish Councillors**

I proposed in the December meeting that I would lead a new campaign this year to recruit new UPC Councillors – The KEY message is to convey NEW people and ideas.

The Plan is to start by advertising in Redhorn News (already in January edition) and local Facebook - a request by Pam for help will be published as an Advert running FOC for up to six months in Redhorn and Facebook to build an awareness that we have a new leader and reflect a more positive future.

We need to produce A4 posters to place in the Parish plus A4/5 leaflets to give to potential candidates.

I am proposing each of our councillors produce up to 5 potential candidates and I am happy to assist to directly approach each person (new people to the village could be part of this who could bring new ideas)

Once we have new recruits and I think it is important some kind of initial mentoring happens to ease the person into Council methods and procedures

Lastly, we need to boast more about our successes, so the Parish sees the value of UPC.

Cllr John Rotherford

iii. Potholes – an email to UPC from Philip Whitehead dated 20th December 2023

The reality is that there are thousands of potholes all over Wiltshire given the very bad autumn again this year with considerable rainfall, which is the major problem around here. Many streams start in this area and if they start under a road they will break the road.

The only thing to do is report them (I personally reported the one on the left on the way to Planks Farm shop, and have reported many others.) and allow out Highways teams to get round to them. I was informed yesterday that they have filled the one I reported which I suspect will be a temporary fill as it really needs a full patch.

Parish Stewards can do temporary fills and will be directed to do so by Highways when we are under pressure.

This is a country wide problem because we do not invest enough money in our infrastructure. Because our finances are go at WC currently we have just signed off and additional £10M to be spent on pothole repair but it will take many months before the impact of the additional spend is seen.

I was in Chiswick, London Borough of Hounslow, the other day and their roads were the same. We should invest more as a nation.

Regards Philip

Philip Whitehead
Councillor for Urchfont and Bishops Cannings
Wiltshire Council | County Hall | Trowbridge | Wiltshire | BA14 8JN

Wiltshire Council



APPENDIX II TO JANUARY 2024 UPC MINUTES

The NP WG did not hold a meeting in December 2023.

APPENDIX III TO JANUARY 2024 UPC MINUTES

Email from Malcolm Turner dated 21st December 2023

Dear Bob and UPC Councillors,

A UPEG Committee meeting was held on 20th December to discuss the future of the Group, which has, over recent months, suffered from a reduced number of Committee members.

There are now only five active members and, hence, the membership is no longer compliant with the original Terms of Reference document drawn up for a Working Group of UPC (attached).

The current Committee members are all keen to carry on with UPEG, as a great deal has been achieved over the past few years. However, the consensus was that the best way forward is to become independent of the Parish Council and to concentrate on smaller, more-manageable projects.

With this in mind, we would like to ask for Parish Council agreement to draw up a revised Terms of Reference document to reflect the new status and set-up.

Please could you also confirm whether there is any remaining funding available this financial year for UPEG projects?

The minutes of the meeting will be available in due course if you wish to see them.

I look forward to hearing from you

Best regards

Malcolm Turner