

DRAFT Minutes of the Urchfont Parish Council (UPC) Full Council Meeting held remotely on Wednesday 10th June 2020.

Present: Councillors: Day (GD – Chairman), Botham (MB), Hill (TH), Cottell (PC), Kemp (MK), Hollyman (MH), Stevens (DS), Kinnaird (LK), Cowen (LC) and Creasey (GC)

Clerk to the Council: Lunn (BL)

Councillor for Urchfont & The Cannings: Whitehead (PW)

Members of the Public (for all or part of the remote meeting): Mr M Smith, Mr S Weller, Mr P Newell (PN), Mr R Hawkins

A. INTRODUCTION

1. Welcome by the Chairman – GD welcomed all including members of the public to the 3rd virtual meeting of UPC. He commented on the great improvement to the telephone kiosk following maintenance and thanked those involved.

2. Apologies: Cllr Cottle (SC)

B. PLANNING – See separate minutes.

C. FULL COUNCIL MEETING

1. Declarations of Interest: None declared at the meeting.

2. Remote Public Participation by / Email input from members of the public and External Reports – No member of the public wished to speak, BL confirmed that he had not received any email representations.

3. Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 13th May 2020

Proposal	Proposer	Seconded	Resolution
To approve and sign the minutes unchanged as a true and accurate record of the meeting.	MB	PC	AGREED by 7 votes for, 2 abstentions due absence and IT difficulties on the night

4. Action List Status Review and Update Reports from the Minutes of the meeting held on 13th May 2020

- i. BL reported that the few actions that remain are justifiably ongoing.
- ii. GD commented that it had been nice to receive a complimentary email from the Head Teacher of Urchfont School about the lay-by.
- iii. GD reported that, following the last meeting, the Clerk had received a complaint which he had passed to GD for action under the UPC Complaints Procedure, resolution of that complaint is ongoing.

5. Finance

a. Financial Statement and Bank Reconciliation as at 31st May 2020 – these documents had been circulated to all councillors prior to the meeting. BL referred to his written report (see appendix on website only) and reiterated the need for councillors to initiate proposed project requirements as soon as possible.

b. To increase Pond Running Cost Budget – Standpipe Hire and Water Charges – BL referred to his proposal which had been distributed to all councillors prior to the meeting. He re-iterated that the main reason for the proposed increase in budget was due to increased costs being charged by a new Wessex Water agent based in Yeovil. BL had investigated the possible alternative option of buying a standpipe and then connecting to a Wessex Water main by agreement of a water charge. However, enquiries with Wessex Water had identified that only standpipes issued by them or their agent under a hire agreement shall be used in the supply area and that it is a criminal offence to do otherwise. PC questioned this on the basis that he understood that commercial businesses could use their own standpipes with a water supply agreement. BL agreed to investigate further, but whatever the main issue here is having sufficient funds in the budget to process whatever supply route is considered best. DS pointed out that whereas previous hires were collected from Westbury, the new agent is now located further away in Yeovil and charges £25 each way for delivery / collection. MB stressed that the use of a standpipe to replenish the pond is a key component of controlling blue Green algae, water is currently evaporating quite quickly with warmer temperatures.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconded	Resolution
To increase the Standpipe budget line by £630 to facilitate standpipe provision by whatever supply route is considered legally acceptable.	GD	PC	AGREED unanimously

c. Financial Assistance Application – GD outlined the application (copied to all councillors prior to the meeting) from Mr & Mrs Cook regarding assistance towards costs for the removal of the large oak tree which had fallen across the footpath URCH 16. GD noted that the application lacked a UPC sponsor and asked MK whether she would be prepared to undertake the role which she accepted. MK commented that the community gains benefit from access across the well maintained land owned by Mr & Mrs Cook. TH referred to a similar application for tree works on private land that had been rejected in the past, LC suggested that the case in question did not involve a public footpath. MK pointed out that the application does not give a definitive cost of the works or suggest what level of contribution the applicant is seeking, TH advised caution as UPC is already considering a lot of money on other projects. Taking account of the debate, the following proposal was made:

Proposal	Proposer	Seconded	Resolution
To defer a decision on this proposal until an invoice for the removal of the tree can be provided by the applicant.	MK	GD	AGREED unanimously

ACTION: FC/32/20 – BL

6. Lead Councillor, Working Groups, Clerk & other Written Reports (See Appendix 1 attached on website only)

- a. Clerks Report** – no update given or questions raised by councillors
- b. Councillor Reports**
 - i. Highways** – no update given or questions raised by councillors
 - ii. Urchfont Pond** – see Agenda Item 7 below
 - iii. UPEG Aims, Objectives and Milestones** – see Agenda Item 9 below

7. To approve budget for Pond Algae project completion, including electro fishing and planting – MB asked all councillors to confirm that they had read the presentation and associated documents which had been distributed prior to the meeting. He then summarised the key points made in each slide and added a few points as follows:

- Residents have their eye on the pond, they have been quickly identifying when issues arise and have a keen interest in resolution of the algae problem.
- Coir rolls will in time rot, not sure how this would look or be remedied.

- MB had talked to Elaine Bancroft about duck proof floating islands and she agreed with the concept
- Scarecrow Committee can provide boats for any maintenance task required

TH asked whether the proposed running costs will reduce as the algae problem is minimised, MB suggested that annual costs could reduce to around £300 to £500 at that stage. TH also asked which floating island scheme MB preferred, MB recommended Frog Environmental at this stage being an elegant proposition that looks good. TH wondered why more fish had not been removed on the 1st occasion and went on to ask whether now is the best time to undertake the proposed electro-fishing based on fish breeding times, might it be better to delay this until February / March next year. MB stated that fish generally breed twice per year, he agreed to talk to the experts with the view selecting the best timeframe option. GD asked whether there is a need to continue aerating the pond, especially as one aerator is hired. MB suggested that this could be considered, but did note that there have been recent problems with fish gasping for air. Noting that her family had in the past caught common newts etc. in Urchfont Pond, LK asked whether they still existed. MB responded that there had been a total reduction of amphibians since the algae problem, although he was pleased to note that some frogs had recently been spotted in bushes near the entrance to Manor Farmyard. A good indication that conditions are improving.

Proposal	Proposer	Secunder	Resolution
To approve an additional budget of £1600 for pond 20/21 running costs	GD	DS	AGREED unanimously
Proposal	Proposer	Secunder	Resolution
To approve an additional project budget of £10,600 for fish removal and planting	GD	DS	AGREED unanimously

GD reiterated that it had been beneficial to hold the public forum last year on the pond, this established an understanding and baseline for the works that have and will be undertaken. Agreeing these increased budgets will facilitate ongoing works to try and eradicate the algae problem, but remember that Bernice Brewster says that it will take time. GD thanked MB for all the work he has undertaken to try and resolve this problem for the benefit of the whole community. It was agreed that the presentation material should be made available with the minutes or published on the website.

ACTION: FC/33/20 - BL

8. New Parish Notice Board for Foxley Fields – LK stated that she was exploring communication possibilities in the Parish, she was surprised to find that the Parish Notice Board which existed in Foxley Fields had apparently disappeared for whatever reason around 15 years ago. On the basis that as far as he is aware no one has ever asked for the board to be replaced, GD asked whether replacement is justified. LK believed that expansion of housing at Uphill and the COVID scenario justifies a new board to widen communication into an area which sometimes feels left out. BL commented that a man made timber board (very low maintenance) and posts is likely to cost in excess of £1500.

Proposal	Proposer	Secunder	Resolution
Proposal to be prepared for consideration at future meeting justifying perceived need, proposed location, type of board and cost.	LK	MB	AGREED unanimously

ACTION: FC/34/20 – LK/BL

9. UPC Environmental Group (UPEG) –, GD invited Mr Newell (PN), as a member of the Working Group to speak. PN said that he was very glad that the Parish Council agreed to support a policy on the environment earlier in the year. It is essential that everyone takes action to address the climate and ecological emergency including parish councils, community groups and individuals. Wiltshire Council have provided a valuable lead in this respect. The UPEG proposals set out in principle a road map for the Parish Council to take their environment policy forward. Whilst there will no doubt be points for further debate, PN hoped that UPC members will support in principle the proposed aim, objectives and milestones.

LC referred to the Aim, Objectives and Milestones slides document, which had been distributed to all councillors prior to the meeting, together with the written report attached at Appendix 1 (on the website only) which together form the road map towards making the Parish more carbon neutral. Having attended a recent UPEG meeting, GD had suggested that we should be aiming at carbon reduction rather than carbon neutral. LC pointed out that the slides had been changed to reflect this, but apologised for the fact that the wrong version of the slide pack had been distributed. A copy of the latest version is to be distributed to all councillors.

ACTION: LC/35/20 - LC

TH asked who will undertake the proposed survey and at what cost, LC confirmed that it is intended to use Richard Bromley (a member of UPEG) and his company who will undertake the survey free of charge. PC stated that as part of their carbon reduction policy, WC had put an obligation on builders to develop environmentally friendly new housing including use of solar panels. PW commented that all current carbon measuring models are based on urban environments, WC is developing a rural model. WC will then produce a package for parish council use. Carbon is not the problem, carbon dioxide is. Carbon reduction is the way forward and, although it may not be achievable, there is a need to set a carbon neutral target.

PN suggested that debate appeared hung up on carbon neutrality, the basic point is that we need to reduce carbon emissions by encouraging the whole community to get involved through Parish Council facilitation. LK emphasised the point that UPC need to take the lead to make a real difference in making the community aware. GD suggested that this could be the subject of a public forum when conditions permit. PN emphasised that UPEG is seeking agreement in principle to the proposals, funding and even free provision to achieve objectives is available from a variety of sources.

GD asked about potential implications of the proposals for existing long term contractors (e.g. Mark Goddard), LC responded by saying that any obligations would only relate to new contracts. TH expressed concerns about potential financial implications of the proposal if set in concrete, LC confirmed that the proposal represented an aspiration or road map which we should seek to achieve. PW agreed that seek is the correct term to use.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
That UPC adopts the UPEG Aim, Objectives and Milestones as a road map towards seeking a carbon neutral Parish by 2030	LC	PC	AGREED unanimously

10. Proposed Lead Councillor Changes – School, Pond and possibly Shop – BL suggested that there may be a conflict of interest if the proposal to make GC (also School Governor) the liaison with the School instead of LK is agreed. GC responded that this had not been an issue over the last three years, if it became one then he would defer to LK. Following further debate the following proposal was made:

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
The following councillors to be the lead with immediate effect for: DS - Pond Green maintenance (except Pond Algae project). MB & MH - Pond Algae project GC - Liaison with the School (with assistance from LK if necessary) LK – new role of Environmental Champion	GD	PC	AGREED Unanimously

11. Crookwood Lay-By - bank planting working party – In response to an email dated 31st May 2020 from Mr D Mottram (copied to all councillors prior to the meeting), GD confirmed that he had distributed the following statement to all councillors (prior to the meeting) to be published in the minutes:

“On Saturday 23rd May, a working party of Urchfont volunteers finalised the Crookwood Lane lay-by project by planting the bank to help stabilise it. Work on the lay-by project (carried out under the oversight of Wiltshire Council Highways) has continued since inception and the close-out served to satisfy the ambitions of nearby residents to have their own direct input:

- Volunteers arrived in distinct household groups
- Volunteers brought their own gloves
- Volunteers brought their own equipment, and many brought donations of plants and bulbs to be planted in the bank
- Strict physical distancing was maintained via markings along the curb
- Volunteers worked in their household groups to complete their task
- Hand sanitiser and wipes were available.

These conditions were set to satisfy the guidance issued by the UK government effective from 11th May 2020 for construction and other outdoor work.

I do not have a definitive list of the volunteers who comprised the working party, nor can I speculate about their ages or medical condition.

The article you read was not drafted by me or the Parish Clerk. Since the start of the coronavirus crisis, UPC has launched a number of initiatives to provide help and support in our community, and I and my Councillor colleagues have been deeply impressed with the speed at which a large number of people have volunteered to help others. We are also grateful for the many messages of thanks we have received.

The project has now been completed, and I envisage no further activity.”

12. Proposed Restart of Sunday Health and Fitness Sessions in Recreation Ground - BL referred to an email from Kay Sherman (copied to all councillors prior to the meeting) seeking approval to restart keep fit classes in the Recreation Ground on Sunday mornings. Approval was originally given in 2018 based on a set of UPC mandatory conditions and guidelines for use of Urchfont Playing Field and Recreation Ground. TH asked whether the proposed exercise area would encroach on the currently closed children’s playground, BL confirmed that it would not as stated in the mandatory conditions.

Proposal	Proposer	Secunder	Resolution
To approve the restart of the Sunday HiiT exercise sessions forthwith in accordance with the UPC Conditions and guidelines for use of Urchfont Recreation Ground issued in 2017 and in strict compliance with evolving Government Coronavirus regulations, social distancing and guidance for outdoor exercise.	GD	MK	AGREED unanimously

13. Update on Current Parish Issues not covered by above agenda items – nothing raised.

14. External Meetings – None reported

15. Councillors’ Other Reports and Items for Future Agenda

a. Councillor Reports

- i. **Community Shop** – MH reported that the shop is looking for a new manager to replace Barbara Myers who will be leaving at the end of June, any suggestions from council members would be welcome. David Myers is also leaving at the end of June and it is understood that his treasurer role be initially assumed by Rodney Gillington.

ACTION: FC/36/20 - ALL

- ii. **Letter from Mayor of Malmesbury Town Council** – TH referred to a letter, which had been copied to all councillors prior to the meeting, warning of potential large scale planning approval

ramifications for any neighbourhood Plan which is more than two years old, including the NWLNP. This warning related to planning approval of 71 houses in Malmesbury due to failure of Wiltshire to maintain a five year land supply. Whilst he did not want to attend the proposed Zoom meeting on 17th June, TH was of the view that UPC should write to the Secretary of State, as requested by the Mayor, outlining concerns and seeking the call in of the specific application. PW commented that the 5 year land supply requirements change periodically and are regulated by the Government, for this reason the application will never be called in. PW recommended that UPC should be working on at least refreshing its neighbourhood plan to recognise the land supply situation. TH believed that a letter should still be written outlining concerns, it was agreed that he circulate a draft for UPC comment.

ACTION: FC/37/20 – TH

b. Items for Future Agenda

- i.** Pathway to Oakfrith Wood (To be addressed when physical meetings in Village Hall are restarted with public attendance)
- ii.** Tree Survey / quotes
- iii.** Duck warning signs
- iv.** Land adjacent to Yew Tree Cottage
- v.** Update on Lydeaway Railway Station Proposal
- vi.** Refurbishment of allotment steps

Date of Next Scheduled Meeting: 8th July 2020

Meeting Closed at 9.10pm

a. CLERK'S REPORT

1. Update on Clerk's actions from May Meeting

FC/28/20 – Purchase of seeds for lay-by bank – Complete, seeds now with Cllr Kinnaird.

FC/31/20 – Japanese Knotweed article in Redhorn News – Article included in UPC section of June 2020 edition.

2. Finance – Financial Summary and Bank Reconciliation as at 31st May 2020 is distributed to all Councillors with this agenda. Accounts are in good order. A claim for a VAT refund of £4,629 has been paid by HMRC in May 2020. Whilst we have an overall project budget, it is important that councillors begin to submit project requirements / quotes for new and ongoing projects to be completed and paid for in this financial year. From the Summary you will note that the Council Insurance Policy has been renewed with effect 1st June, this is the third year of a 5 year Long Term Agreement with Community First / Zurich Insurance approved at the May 2018 FC meeting.

3. Internal and External audits – Documents are awaiting to be collected by Paul Papworth-Smith to carry out the internal audit of 2019/20 accounts. A deadline of 13th July 2020 has been set to complete this audit, including completion of the internal audit report section of the AGAR. Documents will then be submitted to the external auditors prior to the deadline of 31st July, this is a later date than normal as facilitated by the Coronavirus Regulations 2020.

4. Website – This Parish Council and Community website, which was initiated and populated by Urchfont Parish Council in 2012 (Bob Lunn & Dave Mottram), is currently undergoing an upgrade to facilitate a more up to date responsive design and improve accessibility for all users including those with disabilities. What you see now completes the initial and probably the most obvious phase of the update introducing new menu and page templates etc., other changes / improvements will be gradually introduced over the coming days and weeks. The new 'Latest News' menu on the website Home page seems to be working particularly well.

UPC thanks go to e-mango who have been and still are working closely with us to facilitate these changes.

The content of pages has basically remained unchanged as displayed in the previous website templates, but I intend to review and update, in consultation with page owners, individual page content as part of the upgrade project.

5. Coronavirus - Cemetery Status reports – reports continue to be submitted to WC Cemeteries every Tuesday and Thursday since the start of the lockdown in March. Fortunately, no funerals have taken place during this time and so the empty non reserved plot status remains unchanged. One funeral will take place shortly, but this will be in an already occupied plot.

Bob Lunn, Clerk to the Council

b. COUNCILLOR REPORTS

i. HIGHWAYS SURVEY UPDATE JUNE 2020

This is an update of our first survey which was completed in December 2019, and does not guarantee to cover every issue. There were 61 items identified in December which needed addressing, and below are the 17 of those settled to date in green, and additional issues identified in red.

- Blocked drains and a culvert have been cleared at Peppercombe Close, High Street, Blackboard Lane, at the corner of The Paddock, Ballingers, and culvert at the end of Stonepit Lane, Uphill and at the corner of Crooks Lane.
- The broken Wessex Water lid and bricks on Top Green have now been repaired.

- Many potholes have been filled in at Bowdens, B3098 (near Stonepit), Uphill (x2), Sunken manhole patched adjacent to Farmer's Field, Sunken fire hydrant repaired on B3098 and many of the most serious potholes on the road up to Redhorn Hill have been filled.
- The majority of Manor Close has been resurfaced.

Additional issues identified are:

- Possible blocked drains outside the Post Office and next to the pond, and a possible water leak outside Carina Cottage.
- There are large quantities of leaf fall along the pavement next to Farmer's Field, and potholes outside Franklin's farm.

General

- There are a lot of weeds growing in the gutters around the village, particularly, but not exclusively, in Manor Close, Bowdens, The Paddock, Orchard Close and Walnut Close. An application of weed killer is needed to remedy this.
- Many of the gutters and verges are full of straw and general detritus, which tend to be swept into the drains causing blockages when heavy downpours occur. A sweeper is required to remedy the situation.
- S96s have been applied for, in respect of the receding verges all around Pond Green, Top Green, from Cuckoo Corner to the school drive, and the 'nib' of land between Friars Lane and Manor Farmyard.

Cllrs Martyn Hollyman and Mark Botham

ii. Urchfont Pond Algae Update

- In May 2019 UPC held an open meeting called the Pond Forum. The Forum was held to advise parishioners how UPC proposed to respond to the ongoing problems with water quality.
 - In the early summer of 2018 shortly after the Scarecrow Festival the pond was fished by trawling a net across the pond floor. The weather was unseasonably hot and sunny and remained so for the duration of the summer.
 - Within days of the fishing taking place the pond suffered a major red algae bloom along with the rapid growth of a Blue Green Algae (BGA) bloom which remained in the pond after the red algae died off. The pond would have been infected with BGA for some years prior.
 - On 26th July 2018 The Environment Agency tested the water and advised that the BGA count was above 20,000 cells per millilitre and warning signs were required. The signs were erected on 27th July 2018.
 - Revised warning signs were erected on 25th April 2019 following a further Environment Agency test.
- The fishing activity had released nutrients, primarily phosphates and nitrates, held in the silt in the pond and this combined with the ammonia created by fish urea, duck poo and wee and run off from the road resulted in an abundance of nutrients on which the BGA fed and multiplied. UPC called in an industry leader Bernice Brewster to advise on the correct course of action to take to start to resolve the water quality issues.
- "Project One" was the outcome of the Pond Forum based on advice from Industry experts.
 - The key components of Project One were:

- Equip the pond with aeration pumps
 - Treat the silt with powdered calcium carbonate - Siltex
 - Add good bacteria and enzymes to compete with the BGA for nutrients.
 - Add dye to the pond to reduce light levels in the water and slow down the rate of BGA growth.
- "Project One" started on June 29th 2019 when JPR environmental installed an aeration pump and treated the pond with 250KG of Siltex and 25kg of good bacteria and enzymes. Since which time MB and DS have added a further 750KG of Siltex and numerous applications of good bacteria and dye.
- Project one has:
 - Reduced the BGA count from 100,000+ cells per millilitre of pond water to 25,000 cells per millilitre at the last reading. The Urchfont BGA count was the highest that Bernice Brewster has ever encountered. The safe cell count that will permit the removal of the warning signs is 20,000 cells per millilitre. Good progress but not home and dry.
 - Reduced the ammonia and nitrate levels
 - Trapped / fixed the phosphates in the silt
 - Reduced the amount of silt.
 - Reduced the algal blooms – 2018 major red and BGA blooms, 2019 minor red bloom and BGA reduced, 2020 BGA under control but under severe pressure from, large numbers of fish, huge increase in the amount of food being put in the pond, unseasonably dry – hot – bright weather.
- Lessons learned during the last 12 months:
 - No one realised just how many fish there were in the pond. 1500 were removed by electro fishing on 14th May. The contractor estimates there are in all probability between 1000 to 1500 more fish in the pond all adding to the nutrient load. Bernice Brewster commented "wow no wonder you've had problems in the pond". Cllr Botham will propose at the UPC meeting on 10th June that a further day's fishing is authorised to bring the nutrient levels down further as an essential component in reducing the BGA count.
 - Bernice Brewster advised UPC that recovering a pond to good health takes a long time, in some cases years. We are not doing badly, but recent events have delayed our progress :
 - Contractors are only just becoming operational following lockdown. We have probably lost about three months
 - More people at home has meant a lot more duck feeding has placed great strain on the nutrient balance in the pond
 - The addition of a bicycle to the pond has not been welcome.
- It is now time to plant the pond. All 6 of the experts consulted unanimously support planting the pond as the final piece in the jigsaw. A lot of preparation has been done to enable planting to succeed. The proposal to plant British native plants in the pond will be presented at the UPC meeting on June 10th. Planting is now essential as without it Urchfont Pond will be subject to BGA blooms on an ongoing basis and the warning signs will have to remain in place ad infinitum.
- This project is taking longer, and is likely to cost more, than was ever originally envisaged but the objectives remain the same
 - Improve the water quality so that it is safe and warning signs can be removed
 - Use planting to improve the aesthetics of the pond and introduce a natural water-quality control mechanism
 - Create a habitat for aquatic flora and fauna that is missing at the current time.
 - Maintain Urchfont Pond as the quintessential centre of the Parish.

Cllr Mark Botham

iii. URCHFONT PARISH ENVIRONMENTAL GOUP (UPEG) - AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND MILESTONES

The world is facing its greatest threat for millennia – and it has nothing to do with coronavirus.

Our production of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases has blanketed the planet and stopped heat being dispersed into space. We have seen the effects in our parish, with extremes of wet and then long stretches of drought becoming increasingly frequent.

Many scientists warn that, unless urgent action is taken, parts of the world will be uninhabitable by the end of the century.

It is a dire scenario, but it is not irreversible – yet.

We can still reverse the relentless rise in global temperatures by each one of us, individually and as a parish council, taking what are quite minor actions but which, together with what is going on elsewhere in the UK and internationally, will make a difference: turning off lights and electrical appliances when they are not required, walking and cycling short distances instead of taking the car, shopping more locally and eating less red meat.

The planting of more trees, hedges and bushes will capture CO2 and prevent it from being vented into the already saturated atmosphere.

We on the working group feel that the parish council should take a lead in co-ordinating and encouraging the efforts of individual residents to make a difference.

<https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/reports/20-actions-parish-and-town-councils-can-take-climate-and-nature-emergency>

We hope the Parish Council will adopt in principle the aims, objectives and milestones submitted to the 10th June meeting as a roadmap to enable Urchfont Parish to reduce its carbon footprint by 2030. The proposals can, of course, be reviewed regularly and amended as necessary.

Be a Force for Good

Demonstrate Leadership through our own Practical Actions

Use our powers wisely

Clrs Lewis Cowen and Lisa Kinnaird