

DRAFT Minutes of the Urchfont Parish Council (UPC) Virtual Full Council Meeting held remotely on Wednesday 13th May 2020.

Present: Councillors: Day (GD – Chairman), Botham (MB), Hill (TH), Cottell (PC), Kemp (MK), Hollyman (MH), Cottle (SC), 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

A. FULL COUNCIL STATUTORY ANNUAL BUSINESS

1. Election of Officers 20/21

a. Election of Chairman (Standing Orders Clause 12a) – GD asked for nominations, only one was made by TH.

Proposal	Proposer	Second	Resolution
To re-elect Graham Day as Chairman	TH	MK	AGREED unanimously

b. Election of Vice Chairman (Standing Orders Clause 12e) – GD nominated MB, no other nominations were put forward.

Proposal	Proposer	Second	Resolution
To re-elect Mark Botham as Vice Chairman	GD	MH	AGREED unanimously

c. Appoint Lead Councillor of Planning (Standing Orders Clause 12g) – GD nominated TH, no other nominations were put forward.

Proposal	Proposer	Second	Resolution
To re-appoint Trevor Hill as Lead Councillor for Planning	GD	MB	AGREED unanimously

2. Welcome by the Elected Chairman – GD welcomed all to the meeting including a member of the public, Malcom Smith. Mr Smith indicated that he did not want to speak at the meeting, just observe.

3. Apologies: Cllr Stevens (DS)

4. Election of representatives (19/20 representatives shown in brackets)

a. Devizes Community Area Planning Partnership (Trevor Hill)

b. Devizes Area Board (Graham Day)

c. Parish Trust (Graham day)

Proposal	Proposer	Second	Resolution
That the 19/20 representatives should continue for 20/21.	GD	SC	AGREED unanimously

5. Appointment of Internal Auditor – BL confirmed that Paul Papworth-Smith, who lives in Wedhampton and is a qualified accountant, has been the UPC internal auditor for several years and that he has a good working relationship with him. He recommended that Mr Papworth-Smith should be reappointed.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
To re-appoint Paul Papworth Smith as the UPC Internal Auditor	GD	GC	AGREED unanimously

6. Programme for meetings in 2020/21 – GD confirmed that the listing distributed by BL to all councillors prior to the meeting only showed proposed dates, venue will be dependent on the evolving Coronavirus situation.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
To ratify the meeting programme for 20/21	GD	TH	AGREED unanimously

7. Approval of Annual Subscriptions

a. Community First - £40 (Invoice received)

b. National Association of Local Councils and Wiltshire Association of Local Councils (NALC + WALC)
– £418.62 + £83.72 VAT = £502.34 (Invoice Received)

c. Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) - (£215 – 2019/20 subscription)

d. Local Councils Update - (£75 – 2019/20 subscription)

e. ICO Data Protection – (£35 – 2019/20 subscription)

BL confirmed that the above subscriptions had been approved in the 2020/21 budget, including an anticipated percentage inflation increase

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
To agree to renewal of all the above subscriptions within the 2020/21 budget	GD	LK	AGREED unanimously

End of Statutory Annual business

B. PLANNING – See separate agenda.

C. FULL COUNCIL MEETING

1. Declarations of Interest – None made at the meeting

2. Public Participation by / Email input from members of the public and External Reports – None

3. Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 8th April 2020

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
To approve the minutes unchanged as a true and accurate record of the meeting	LC	TH	AGREED unanimously

4. Action List Status Review and Update Reports from the Minutes of the meeting held on 8th April 2020

a. Complaint regarding decision on Oakfrith Wood Pathway entrance – GD referred to Item 6v which refers to a combination of Crookwood Lay-By and Oakfrith Pathway discussion and decisions. On 10th April PW submitted a procedural complaint that a decision should not have been made on his proposal about the Oakfrith Path entrance because this had not been specifically included on the agenda. As a result it has been

decided that the proposal will be re-visited at a future meeting and that in the meantime no action will be taken regarding the entrance. BL advised PW of this by e-mail on 10th April

b. Action Status Review – BL asked for an update on the following from PC:

- FC/71/19 – Lydeaway Mileage Stone Damage – PC stated that Linda Jennings has made a good job of repairing the faceplate, but that the milestone is still in pretty poor condition. He understands that WC have passed the issue to SSE who caused the damage.
- FC/81/19 – Investigate Wedhampton/ A342 footpath signage with WC – PC confirmed that he has emailed WC on this but has not had a response.
- FC/26/20 – Speak to Community Bus Committee about the possibility of the bus being used to collect stores for the Community Shop – PC stated that he had not spoken to the Committee but is confident that they would not have a problem with this in the same way as the bus has been made available to WC. The shop need to request if required.

5. Finance

a. Financial Statement and Bank Reconciliation as at 30th April 2020 – BL confirmed that he had distributed these statements to all councillors prior to the meeting, see also his report at Appendix 1. No comments or questions were raised.

b. Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) – Section 1 – Governance – BL explained that this Part 1 Statement had been distributed to all councillors prior to the meeting, approval is a statutory requirement as part of the external audit review and has to be approved prior to Section 2 – Accounting Statement (below).

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
To approve the AGAR Part 1 Statement	GD	SC	AGREED unanimously

c. Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) - Section 2 - Accounting

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
To approve the AGAR Part 2 Statement	GD	TH	AGREED unanimously

d. Clerks Pay Recommendation following Appraisal – GD reported that he and MB had carried out the 19/20 review remotely and based on performance criteria for local council officers. GD congratulated BL on another fantastic year during which he not only met but in many cases exceeded the criteria. MB confirmed the excellent, supportive and responsive performance.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
To approve the move from NALC spine point 17 to 18 backdated to 1 st April 2020.	GD	MH	AGREED unanimously

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

a. Clerks Report – BL updated his report on the website which he is actively upgrading with the website host to make it more modern, responsive and to comply with new accessibility regulations. BL reported that he had today given the host the go ahead to transition the existing website content to the new templates as an initial phase, this is likely to happen 'live' over the next couple of days. BL will then review to ensure that it all works and then move to the next phase to consider adding some new functions (e.g. addition of an interactive poll function), amending / updating pages and other improvements.

b. Councillor Reports

i. **Urchfont Parish Environment Group** – no update required

ii. **Crookwood Lane Lay-By Project** – GD confirmed that the lay-by had now been completed, had been inspected by WC Highways and received their approval in all respects. WC noted that the agreed 5yr warranty period with UPC exceeded their normal requirement. GD congratulated Geoff Potter and Peter Huntley on the successful completion of an excellent job.

iii. **UPC Highways Report** – PW asked whether verges outside his house are included in the proposed work schedule, he believed that about half a metre has been lost in places. MH responded that this location had not been surveyed to date, but that it would be included in the next UPC survey to be completed within the next month.

ACTION: FC/27/20 – MH/MB

iv. **Urchfont Pond Update** – MB confirmed that electro-fishing will take place all day on 14th May 2020 with the aim of removing significant numbers of fish to an identified wildlife park. Then, when the water subsequently settles after about two weeks, another sample will be sent off for analysis in the hope that levels of algae have been significantly reduced.

(Post Meeting Note: 800 fish were removed within the first 3 hours of electro-fishing)

v. **2020 Tree Survey** – Nothing to add to written report, but see Item 8 below.

vi. **Coronavirus Community Volunteer Support** – LK reported that activity has gone reasonably quiet recently, apart from pharmacy collections and distribution (thanks to Trevor & Gill Hill). The WC Wellbeing Hub is making a difference. GD commented that the facilities advertised by the Support Group were very good to help the vulnerable in these unprecedented times, he thanked all the volunteers for their ongoing excellent service and support.

7. **Crookwood Lane Lay-By** – Confirming that the project had been structurally signed off by UPC and WC Highways, GD went on to explain that a socially distanced site meeting attended by councillors and some immediate neighbours had been held recently to discuss planting of the bank up to the new fence line. Based on advice from a local expert, LK explained that a recommendation had been made and agreed to plant a seed mix specific for a north facing bank at a cost of £75 for three boxes which should be sufficient to cover the whole area. In addition LK is looking to plant any wild plants donated by members of the community.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
To approve the purchase of seeds for a north facing bank at a cost of £75.	LK	GD	AGREED unanimously

ACTION: FC/28/20 – LK/BL

As a near neighbour, PW indicated he would have liked to attend the site meeting to discuss the bank planting. GD noted his comments.

8. **Tree Survey Results** – having studied the 20 page comprehensive survey report, SC highlighted the fact that 24 trees in the Parish are suffering from Ash dieback. If the extent exceeds 50% then they will have to be felled. In this context he proposed setting up a monitoring group to check the condition using a toolkit provided in the survey document, all trees need to be marked to facilitate this. BL noted that all trees subject to the survey are already marked with a small numbered tag, SC agreed but felt that these are too small to readily identify the ash trees in question. PC suggested the possibility of using paint, TH said that he had some aluminium tags 1 x 3 inches which can be marked. GC commented that in Oakfrith they mark the trees with a X using a chainsaw.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconder	Resolution
To visibly mark trees suffering ash die back to facilitate ongoing monitoring to determine when and if action needs to be taken. Set up a group to monitor these trees.	SC	GC	AGREED unanimously

ACTION: FC/29/20 – SC

PW commented that we are losing a large number of trees in the Village, maybe 30 or so in the last year, he is keen that the overall number of trees do not reduce more. LC expressed the view that any tree that is felled should be replaced on a 2 for 1 basis. TH commented that some tree felling applications indicate that replacements will be planted, MK commented that a lot of planning consents come with conditions that replacements are planted. GD expressed the view that PW is right to be concerned, but over time trees do come back naturally or by replanting.

SC stated that the report includes one tree on Paddock Green which is classified as high priority, it could be modified or felled and 5 in the Medium Priority category, 2 of which are identified for felling. TH stated residents neighbouring the tree on Paddock Green want it felled because it is multi-stemmed and they believe is a threat to their house. LC reiterated his view that all trees felled should be replaced 2 for 1, TH responded that Paddock Green is used by a lot of playing children, he would not want it to be turned into a forest. GC said that MOD fell trees and replace on a 1 for 1 basis but not necessarily in the same location. LC stated that the Environmental WG is looking at areas for planting trees, but it is not looking too hopeful to date, surely it would be better to use Parish Council owned land. PC agreed with LC view

Proposal	Proposer	Seconded	Resolution
To obtain advice and quotes on works to High and Medium Priority trees identified in the Survey Report. Replace trees that are felled on a 2 for 1 felled basis	LC	LK	REJECTED - 3 in favour, 6 against

Proposal	Proposer	Seconded	Resolution
To obtain advice and quotes on works to High and Medium Priority trees identified in the Survey Report. Replace trees that are felled on a 1 for 1 felled basis	SC	GD	AGREED unanimously

ACTION: FC/30/20 – SC

9. Update on Current Parish Issues not covered by above agenda items – MK reported that Japanese Knotweed had appeared in Old School Lane in March, she had reported this to WC via the My Wiltshire App and had been advised that it will be inspected and initial action taken in August / September. Unfortunately MK subsequently heard that a close neighbour had cut down the Knotweed and poured weed killer on the root. A sign has now been erected and the area taped off to prevent further activity. PW commented that cutting down is the worst that can be done, any remaining cuttings however small can regenerate and widen the problem. PC agreed with PW, by partially destroying the plant you can make the situation worse. LC suggested that an article should be put in the next edition of Redhorn News warning that suspected Knotweed should not be disturbed but reported immediately to WC via the App.

ACTION: FC/31/20 - BL

10. External Meetings – None reported

11. Councillors’ Other Reports and Items for Future Agenda

a. Out of Date Notices Posted around the Village – MK reported that she had spotted a number of sometimes tatty notices remaining on lamp posts and telegraph poles long past their valid date. Organisations posting notices should take responsibility to monitor and remove notices in a timely manner. MK further believed that notices should not be displayed on bridleways and rights of way. LK pointed out that there is not a notice board in or around Foxley Fields, should the Council consider installing one and where could it go? This would potentially widen communications in the community. (Item for future agenda) LK asked about displaying a UPEG notice in the Parish seeking potential tree planting sites, it was generally agreed that if this is a UPC notice then it should only be displayed in Parish Notice Boards.

b. Community Shop – As a councillor and resident, MK wanted to record a vote of thanks to the Shop volunteers and in particular the managers who have stepped up and worked extremely hard to support and assist

the vulnerable during these unprecedented times. GD agreed and added that general support in the wider community has been excellent – true community spirit is being displayed.

c. Items for future agendas –

- Pathway to Oakfrith Wood Proposal, when results of the request for community views has been completed at the end of May and analysed.
- New Notice Board for Foxley Fields

Date of Next Scheduled Meeting: 10th June 2020

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.25pm.

a. CLERK'S REPORT

1. Update on Clerk's actions from April Meeting

FC/23/20 – Advise Mr & Mrs Everett that they will be consulted on Lay-By bank planting scheme – email sent and acknowledged.

FC/25/20 – To cancel Parish Meeting on 29th May 2020 – cancelled with Village Hall and on website

2. Finance – Financial Summary and Bank Reconciliation as at 30th April 2020 is distributed to all Councillors with this agenda. Accounts are in good order. The first of two 50% instalments of the PRECEPT has been received, together with £3,202.38 CIL funds being the last instalment from the Beeches development. A claim for the refund of £4,629 VAT has been submitted but not yet paid.

3. Internal and External audits – following the end of the financial year on 31st March 2020, I have commenced preparation of the accounts and supplementary information / variance explanations for the annual financial and governance audits. With the agreement of the internal auditor, the internal audit will commence in mid-May. Documentation for the external audit has to be submitted by 31st July 2020 in accordance with revised timescales in the Coronavirus 2020 Regulations. The Annual AGAR (Accounting and Governance Annual Return) is submitted to the Council for approval in this agenda.

4. Tree Survey – The approved tree survey by Astill Treecare Ltd has been completed and the report submitted, this has been passed to Cllr Cottell for review prior to his recommendations to Council for tree works.

5. Website – The current website design has been in place since 2012, it has worked well to meet our needs and that of the community. I am now working with our website host to update / upgrade the website to a more responsive design and to facilitate compliance with the new Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 by the deadline of 22nd September 2020. The guidelines aim to make websites more accessible to people with disabilities.

6. UPC Protocol for Remote Meetings – Based on a template provided by WALC, in consultation with the Chairman I have produced a UPC specific version to facilitate remote meetings in accordance with the Coronavirus 2020 Regulations. This is published on the website 'Home' page and in 'Policies and Procedures'.

Bob Lunn, Clerk to the Council

b. COUNCILLOR REPORTS

i. URCHFONTS PARISH ENVIRONMENT GROUP

UPEG has now held five virtual meetings and is currently employed in drawing up an inventory of aims, objectives and milestones as a roadmap to what it proposes to recommend to UPC to achieve in the parish over the next few years.

Among these is a plan to plant as many trees and hedges as possible to mitigate the carbon footprint of the parish and we are trying to identify possible planting sites with the help of parishioners and others. Any suggestions from councillors would be most welcome.

We are also looking to encourage local residents to minimise their own carbon footprints by addressing energy use, recycling and other similar issues.

The parish council will also need to look at its own carbon footprint and adopt relevant policies when signing contracts with outside companies.

We hope to have a draft inventory of aims, objectives and milestones to put before councillors at the June meeting of UPC.

The group now comprises Councillors Lewis Cowen (chairman), Lisa Kinnaird, Katharine Wale (secretary), Richard Bromley and former parish council chairman Peter Newell.

Councillors Lewis Cowen and Lisa Kinnaird

ii. CROOKWOOD LANE LAY-BY PROJECT

Geoff Potter has now completed his work on the lay-by. The banks have been raked and soil replaced as necessary, the western end has been re-laid with soil, the entrance to the kissing gate/double steel gate has been graded and all fencing has been removed. I think it looks an excellent job. All Councillors are encouraged to visit and see for themselves.

WC Highways have reserved the right to inspect the outcome, so Geoff will be writing to Malcolm Beaven (Area Manager Highways North) to invite a WC inspection and/or for WC to issue a sign-off for the project. Once this has been received by Bob, we shall declare the project complete and settle outstanding contractual payments.

Councillor Lisa Kinnaird has offered to organise a volunteer group to plant the bank with a mix of bulbs (donated by herself from her garden) and a wild-flower mix suitable for shaded/woody areas. This has the support of local residents. This activity should commence as soon as we have achieved WC sign-off.

View looking west

View looking east

The Double Gate



Councillor Graham Day

iii. UPC HIGHWAYS REPORT

Verges

- We have again inspected and measured the Urchfont grass verges, and there has been no further recession evident since our last inspection in February.
- The Wessex Water broken cover on the corner of the triangle opposite to Green Farm has now been repaired.
- S96s have now been submitted to WC requesting permission for verge repairs to be carried out.

Gulley's

- Since the WC gulley team have attended the blocked drains we reported earlier this year, it was pleasing to see that after some heavy downpours most of the previously flooded drains proved clear.
- One exception is the sunken drain cover adjacent to Farmers Field which still needs repairing and clearing. We are chasing this.

Councillors Martyn Hollyman and Mark Botham

iv. URCHFONT POND UPDATE

- The pond is now a registered fishery
- Aquatic Management Services successfully submitted a fish movement request.
- Aquatic Management Services in conjunction with Devizes Angling Association were not able to identify a pond / lake in the area that was self-contained i.e. without an inlet or exit for water. As a result we could have been forced to incur the following extra costs:

Moving fish to a pond / lake with an inlet or outlet requires a health check to be performed on each species to be moved. This would involve an extra day 's cost to catch and deliver the specimens to a testing centre (5 specimens per species) .The cost of the removal of the fish would escalate by £600 for an additional day's fishing plus a health check fee of £200 per species.

- Aquatic Management, have today 06/05 advised that they have found a wildlife park willing to take the fish without the need for a health check. However, there will be an additional cost of £100 to deliver the fish to the new location. There are funds in the pond budget to cover the additional cost.

Councillor Mark Botham

v. 2020 TREE SURVEY

In April 2020 Jonathan Astill completed the Tree Survey on the behalf of UPC, here is a brief summary of his findings.

One key difference that has been added to the report is the monitoring for Ash Dieback across a number of the trees within the Parish, these can be seen in the full report highlighted in blue.

Out of the 90 tagged trees within the Parish 24 trees have been identified for monitoring for Ash Dieback, 8 are in Recreation Ground, 5 on the Path to Oakfrith Woods, 2 in Cemetery/Allotments, 7 on the Paddock Green and 2 around the Pond.

I suggest that we find a way of marking these trees safely so that they can be easily identified for monitoring and recording any changes within their canopy. This can be done by anyone or a designated team of people from councillors, contracted ground maintenance and members of the public. If the foliar volume within the crown of any of these trees decreases to <50% we would have no option but to unfortunately fell the tree.

The report categorised the trees in to priorities from high to low works required:



High Priority Category - we only have 1 tree identified as high priority which is on the Paddock green. We have been given 2 options on how to deal with the poor health issues of this tree:

1. being to remove the ring-barked and declining stem and to reduce the crown circa by 2.5m and the lateral spread by 1.5m to reduce leverage of tight unions at the base
2. is to fell and replace with smaller specimen

Medium Priority - there are 5 trees that have been identified; 2 need to be felled, 1 requires dead wood to be removed, 1 with limb reduction and 1 needs to be felled or have its entire crown retaining a 5 metre-high standing deadwood monolith for habitat.

Low Priority - there are 28 trees identified in this category of which most just need the deadwood removing from them.

All in all the trees seem to be in a better shape from last time the report was conducted which was back in 2017.

I believe the best way forward would to get quotes for the High and Medium Priority work as soon as possible. Find a safe way of marking trees for Ash Dieback monitoring and to set up a working party of volunteers to monitor and record their health through the summer.

Councillor Steven Cottle

vi. CORONAVIRUS COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

As this is a fairly large and comprehensive report it can be reached via a LINK on the AGENDA page. (Included with agenda for councillors)

Cllr Lisa Kinnaird