

DRAFT Minutes of the Urchfont Parish Council (UPC) Meeting held remotely on Wednesday 9th December 2020 v.1

Present: Councillors: Day (GD – Chairman), Botham (MB – Vice Chairman), Hill (TH), Kemp (MK), Cowen (LC), Creasey (GC), Hollyman (MH), Cottle (SC) and Rotherham (PR)

Clerk to the Council: Lunn (BL)

Councilor for Urchfont & The Cannings: Whitehead (PW)

Members of the Public (for all or part of the remote meeting): Mr. S Holt, Mr. D Kinnaird, Mr. S Veitch, Mr. J Cain, Ms T Reay, Ms. C Symington, Mr. M Smith, Mrs M Whitehead, Mr. R Hawkins

A. INTRODUCTION

1. Welcome by the Chairman – GD welcomed all to the meeting and made the following comments:

- Good to see SC at the meeting and that he is recovering well from his operations
- Thanked the Community Bell Team for the excellent Christmas telephone box display
- Thanked the team who erected the Christmas tree and lights on Pond Green last weekend
- Advised that Cllr Phillip Cottell (PC) had resigned from UPC with immediate effect on 4th December 2020. GD had been unable to contact PC since to discuss the reasons and so felt that he had no alternative to accept the resignation. PC joined UPC by co-option in June 2018, and GD thanked him for his service.

2. Apologies: Cllr Stevens (DS)

3. Update on Devizes Parkway Proposals by Tamara Reay (TR) and Catharine Symington (CS) – briefly introducing themselves:

- TR said that she had previously worked for Clare Perry MP and Danny Kruger MP and is now heavily involved with this project;
- Having extensive work experience in the rail industry, CS explained that she is now assisting the Devizes Partnership to take this project forward to hopefully a successful conclusion.

Slides were then presented showing the development, progress and future actions on this proposal which will hopefully end up with Devizes Parkway being implemented in 2025. A link to the presentation slides used can be found under the draft minutes on the website. The primary objective of the proposals is to significantly improve rail connectivity within Wiltshire, as well as on longer routes, thereby encouraging less use and reliance on other forms of transport.

MH asked whether earlier reports that industrial units would be included within the proposal are true – CS responded that there are no plans to include industrial units or housing etc. MH then asked whether the project will consider facilitating later last trains from London, currently around 9pm to Pewsey or Westbury which do not cater for theatre trips and later business meetings. CS agreed that this was a very frustrating situation and confirmed that this is being considered along with hourly rather than 2 hourly departures.

GD sought clarification of the acronyms in the presentation:

- SWLEP – Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership
- GVA – Gross Value Added
- IET – Intercity Express Train
- SOBC – Strategic Outline Business Case

GD thanked TR and CS for attending the meeting and giving a very enlightening presentation, he looked forward to receiving updates in due course.

B. PLANNING – See separate agenda.

C. FULL COUNCIL MEETING

1. Declarations of Interest – None declared at the meeting

2. Remote Public Participation / Email input from members of the public and External Reports – As no attending members of the public wished to speak apart from Mr Kinnaird, GD agreed to defer his comments until Item 7 below. BL confirmed that he had not received any written representations.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 11th November 2020

Proposal	Proposer	Seconded	Resolution
To approve and sign the minutes unchanged as a true and accurate record of the meeting.	GD	TH	AGREED with one abstention due to absence from last meeting

4. Action List Status Review and Update Reports from the Minutes of the meeting held on 11th November 2020 – BL commented that all of the few actions outstanding are in progress and do not need review at this stage. As agreed at the November meeting, GD asked PW if he had received the requested details from PC of the damaged milestone and Wedhampton footpath A342 crossing outstanding with WC. PW agreed to check to ensure that these actions can be progressed.

ACTION: FC/61/20 - PW

5. Finance

a. Financial Summary and Bank Reconciliation as at 30th November 2020 – these documents had been distributed to all councillors prior to the meeting. No questions were asked or clarification requested at the meeting.

b. Projects Budget 20/21 – MB reported the fact that DEFRA had imposed restrictions following avian flu outbreaks in the UK which require action by 14th December to protect the ducks on Urchfont Pond. Following consultation with DS and PR on measures to be taken, MB has purchased a purpose built netted cage at a cost of £340 which can be attached to the Duck House to provide the necessary protection and meet DEFRA requirements. MB proposed that a project budget of up to £500 be approved to cover this purchase and any additional costs to secure / modify. Delivery of the cage is expected on or about the DEFRA deadline.

Proposal	Proposer	Seconded	Resolution
To approve a project budget of up to £500 to meet DEFRA requirements for the protection of the Urchfont Ducks.	MB	PR	AGREED unanimously

Whilst not a project budget, GD reported that he had been trying to get proposals from Redhorn News on the likely increased UPC contribution to production costs of the magazine now that the previous agreement had expired. A written response is awaited.

c. PRECEPT 21/22 – As required by UPC Standing Orders Clause 50a, BL presented a draft 21/22 budget (see Appendix 2 on the website only) with the sole purpose of informing the PRECEPT decision process. The PRECEPT demand has to be submitted to WC by 18th January 2021 at the latest. The 21/22 final budget will be presented for approval at the March 2021 meeting when 20/21 expenditure and income are better defined and the budget can be adjusted to take account of the approved PRECEPT demand.

The draft budget takes account of Fixed and Running Costs together with projects proposed by councillors at this stage. The budget suggests a current shortfall in funding available of some £60k, although some infrastructure projects might be able to use the separate ring fenced CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) fund expected to be available to Council during 21/22 (£29k).

Taking account of the information presented, BL suggested that Council now needed to decide the level of PRECEPT that they can comfortably justify to the Parish, expenditure would then be tailored in line with this. GD pointed out a significant catchup on projects had taken place during 20/21 (e.g. Crookwood Lay-by, Pond Algae) and this resulted in more expenditure than being suggested for 21/22. Following a pretty miserable 2020 due to the pandemic, TH expressed the view that maybe the PRECEPT 21/22 demand should remain unchanged to that in 20/21 and result in a small saving rather than increase in the Parish council tax element. BL advised that this might be an unwise move in that we do not know whether the Precept could be % capped in future years and therefore limit funds available, PW confirmed that no cap will be in place for 21/22. GD saw himself looking in the middle of the council tax example table to keep increases to a minimum. MK agreed that any increase in Parish council tax should be minimal and suggested that the Council will need to cut back on project requirements or seek additional funding from elsewhere if necessary. SC agreed with MK. LC commented that the increase in the Parish element of council tax for 20/21 was around 2% and suggested that a similar increase should apply for 21/22. MB pointed out that this would represent an increase of £1.87 per annum for a band D property, increases in this middle range are all relatively small. TH suggested that a 1% increase would demonstrate that the Council is not being greedy in these unprecedented times. Whilst the County element of council tax will not be decided by WC until February, PW confirmed that WC is subject to a 1.99% cap.

Proposal	Proposer	Secunder	Resolution
Subject to final confirmation at the January meeting, to propose a demand of £52,103.50 which will result in an increased Parish element of council tax of £0.93 per annum for a Band D property.	GD	TH	AGREED – 7 votes for and 1 against

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

a. Clerks Report – no update or clarification required

b. Councillor Reports

i. UPEG – MB updated his written report by advising that subsequent investigation identified that the proposal to plant in Oakfrith Wood does not satisfy the 'free' tree criteria, an alternative funding route will need to be identified. TH questioned why this is the case, MB stated that it is all to do with intended planting location being too much in the shade and overshadowed by larger trees. GD added that the planting area needs to be close to a footpath / bridleway. GC commented that the removal of hedging by the farmer in the adjacent field has exposed Oakfrith trees to possible weather damage, he will discuss potential solutions further at the next meeting of the Trustees in March 2021 and report back to UPC.

Assuming the agreement of UPC, MB indicated that it is intended to put out a simple questionnaire to the community seeking ideas for planting on Parish owned or managed land. This was agreed by Council on the understanding that any proposals are presented to the Council for approval prior to any action being taken.

UPEG would like UPC to encourage parishioners to plant in their gardens, with at least some plants being sourced by UPEG. TH commented that this should be Parish wide and not targeted at one or more specific areas (e.g. Walnut Close which was previously suggested). Subject to the comment by TH, UPC agreed to support the proposal.

ii. Urchfont Tree Works – SC reported that there had been no further progress regarding quotes for tree works, GC added that there appears to be little interest from tree surgeons. PW commented that most tree surgeons are fully engaged at present dealing with ash dieback. GC asked whether a budget could be earmarked now for this work so that when appropriate quotes are gained that work can be commissioned quickly. In terms

of the UPC Financial Regulations, BL confirmed that this would be acceptable as a peg in the ground pending completion of the quote process. He also mentioned that Council have discretion to remove the requirement for three quotes for services / purchases over £1000 if it can be fully demonstrated that three is not achievable. GC suggested that an update report should be given at the January meeting when a specific proposal can be made for budget and funding approval.

ACTION: FC/62/20 – SC/GC

iii. UPC Highways – no update or clarification required

7. Meeting Accessibility – an email had been received from Mr Kinnaird suggesting that the public are not given sufficient information about and more importantly easy / open access to council meetings, especially during this unprecedented pandemic period when virtual meetings are necessary.

Chairman closed the meeting for public participation

Admitting that he is somewhat disorganised and, for example, missed UPEG discussion at earlier meetings because he did not pre-register prior to the deadline, Mr Kinnaird advocated the need to make meetings far more accessible without the need for pre-registration. He also advocated the publication of agenda on Community Facebook ideally with a direct link to the Zoom meeting log on. He had recently conducted a poll on Community Facebook which had identified that 24 (out of possibly 800+ users) indicated that they wanted agenda and Zoom id published.

Chairman reopened the Council meeting

GD commented that UPC had been holding virtual meetings since April, this is the ninth meeting and members of the public have attended all but the first in April 2020. No other members of the Parish have raised concerns about access to council meetings to date. All members of the public with internet can easily access the open website for information on meeting dates and agenda when issued. UPC have previously discussed and voted against the use of Facebook for a variety of reasons. GD expressed the view that we have a process that is not broken and is easy to use, why change it? MK believed that access to meetings has in fact been easier and more acceptable to members of the public who do not have to even leave their homes to attend. She also believed that there may be a general lack of public interest in attending meetings rather than people just forgetting to pre-register before the deadline. TH does not use Facebook and reiterated the fact that meeting information is already available via a number of platforms, is a reminder on Facebook really necessary?

MB asked BL what he thought about security implications associated with using social media to publicise council meetings. Although not an expert, BL responded that he believed using social media for issuing reminders or local information does not present a problem, but publication of secure codes to access a Council meeting can result in unwanted intrusion or misuse from much wider than the local community. In his view, guidance quoted in the NALC Remote Meeting Guide (distributed to councillors prior to the meeting) and Cabinet Office / Government Digital Office advice tend to err on the side of caution, detailed risk assessment and controlling attendance by use of passwords and id. From his research he had identified that some local and wider parish councils use a similar pre-registration system to regulate access to council meetings, others openly display Zoom access codes. One smaller local council is still holding physical meetings. BL also pointed out that the current publication of agenda on the website and notice boards remains identical now to pre-pandemic apart from the virtual aspect. Meeting date reminders are published in the Redhorn News monthly. BL also reiterated the fact that public attendance at monthly physical meetings ranged from zero to 25, with a resulting distorted average of 6.9 over a twelve month period.

SC suggested that technology is available to download a link to the scheduled meeting list on the website directly into individual diaries, this would act as the reminder. He also emphasised that any use of Facebook has to and must be closely managed.

Chairman closed the meeting for public participation

Mr Kinnaird re-iterated his request to facilitate an easier access for members of the public to observe but not necessarily speak at council meetings. As a minimum he believed a simple reminder on Community Facebook that a meeting is taking place would be a start, this is a well-used social media platform to make people aware.

Chairman reopened the Council meeting

Proposal	Proposer	Seconded	Resolution
To maintain current methods of meeting publicity (website, notice boards and Redhorn News) and pre-registration to attend a specific meeting, but at the same time look to adding additional reminders of meetings taking place	GD	MB	AGREED unanimously

MB volunteered to put meeting reminders on Community Facebook with reference to the agenda (when published) being on the website, but not to publish Zoom access codes. GD accepted this offer.

ACTION: FC/63/20 - MB

8. Impacts of COVID-19 – TH reported that he has had a few contacts to deliver prescriptions, but a lot less than in earlier lockdown. Day Lewis Pharmacy is currently being inundated with last minute requests for prescriptions, as a result the new pharmacist has asked if UPC can publicise the need to order repeat prescriptions at least five working days prior to personal supplies running out. BL has already put an article on the website under 'Latest News' on the home page and will repeat in the next edition of Redhorn News.

9. Farmers Field – MK reported that LC had been trying to gain information from WC Planning on whether planning permission will be necessary for the proposed shipping container in Farmers Field to store equipment, but without success to date. PW confirmed that a response will be received shortly. A visit by 'Plant for our Lives' to consider the boundary at the rear of Farmers Field for whip planting to replace the barbed wire, identified a similar shade problem to Oakfrith Wood. They have suggested that dead [I thought I heard "dead"] hedging would be a much better option as a boundary and for wildlife, this is being considered further.

10. B3098 Speed Zones – PW apologised that he will not be able to beneficially move this forward until January/February 2021.

11. Update on Current Parish Issues not covered by above agenda items – MH referred to Census 21 and the need to promote completion of the exercise by all members of the community. At the start of the pandemic, UPC successfully hand delivered assistance leaflets to all households, should we do the same for Census 21? MK considered this a great idea, GD cautioned on the legality of actually assisting people to complete census forms. It was agreed that MH should develop the idea.

ACTION: FC/64/20 - MH

12. External Meetings – None reported.

13. Councillors' Other Reports – None reported.

14. Items for Future Agenda (in addition to anything mentioned above)

- a. Pathway to Oakfrith Wood (To be addressed when physical meetings in Village Hall are restarted with public attendance)
- b. Parish Meeting 2021 – MK suggested that in the hope of being able to hold such a meeting, that UPC should consider how to attract more attendance. GD commented that the idea of inviting local groups and organisations to attend as suggested for the cancelled 2020 meeting should be revisited.

Date of Next Scheduled Meeting: 13th January 2021

GD complimented BL on anticipating his closing comments summarised in the following graphic.



There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.10pm

APPENDIX 1 TO THE DECEMBER 2020 UPC FC AGENDA

a. CLERK'S REPORT

1. Update on Clerk's actions from November Meeting

FC/55/20 – Insurance cover for FoFF Storage Facility – awaiting response from insurance company

FC/60/20 – Add UPEG due diligence to appropriate UPC policies – the following clause, already in the Environmental Policy, will be added to Standing Orders Clause 71 (Financial Matters) and UPC Financial Regulations Clause 7 (Procurement Policies). These Policies are being further reviewed for any other updates and will be submitted to the January 2021 meeting for final approval.

"Due Diligence 4.1 The Council shall carry out due diligence prior to entering into any contract for the provision of equipment or services to assess the impact on the environment of the supply chain and to ensure the Council does not knowingly, or foreseeably, act in breach of local regulations protecting the environment and where feasible to enable the Council to limit its environmental impact in selecting those goods and services.

2. Finance – The Financial Summary and Bank Reconciliation as at 30th November 2020 have been distributed to all councillors. This information demonstrates that the accounts are in good order. The predicted Reserve at 31st March 2021 at £15,982 is higher than the target primarily because of the unexpected Small Business Grant received from WC and predicted spend by the end of the financial year, the Reserve will undoubtedly change over the next four months.

3. PRECEPT DEMAND 21/22 – The demand needs to be submitted to WC by 18th January 2021, but ideally Council should consider and approve the PRECEPT at this meeting. Please see the indicative budget (as at 30th November 2020) at Appendix 2 designed to inform Council of the likely expenditure and funding requirements in 21/22 to facilitate a decision on the PRECEPT. This takes account of proposed project requirements proposed by Councillors. Note that the indicative budget does not include any carry-forward amounts resulting from potential unspent project budget funds in 20/21. The final budget for 21/22 will be presented to the March 21 meeting taking account of the latest 20/21 spend data available, likely carry forward project budgets and adjusted to reflect the approved PRECEPT demand submitted.

4. Boomcast Multi-Media Broadcast System – Due to other demands, I have still not yet been able to contact the contact in Easterton to establish more about this system and its potential benefits which might be of use to UPC.

Bob Lunn, Clerk to the Council

b. COUNCILLOR REPORTS

i. UPEG Report - A UPEG virtual meeting was held on 23rd November 2020 attended by Lisa Kinnaird (LK), Katharine Wale (KW), Peter Newell (PN), Sam Dixon (SD), Liz Clifton Page (LCP) and Mark Botham (MB) (who chaired the meeting following apologies from Graham Day (GD))

Key points discussed at the meeting

- Village energy audit – UPEG to investigate new sources of software, measurement methods etc to build on the initial work conducted by Richard Bromley. Input will be sought from local councils such as Bradford on Avon who have already conducted an audit. Action: LK, SD, LCP
- MB to expand on brief initial talks with the church and village shop to identify how UPEG can add value to their green and environmental activities.
- UPEG has been invited by the Friends of Oakfrith Wood to plant a new 100m + hedge along the northern boundary of the wood. LK will organise plants and attend site meeting.

- Hedge and tree planting in Farmers Field – MB to liaise with Friends of Farmers Field to coordinate UPEG input.
- UPEG will develop a programme for the 2021 National Tree Week to encourage tree planting in the Parish. A provisional budget for trees / hedging plants to be established. MB to get costs.
- MB to talk to Graham Creasey about involving the school in planting initiatives.
- UPEG to investigate local schemes for community composting to identify opportunities that could be adopted in Urchfont. Action: LCP, MB
- UPEG to develop a green transport guide for the village to be published in May 21. Input to be sought from the Community Bus Team. Action: GD

UPC Input Required

- UPC to consider opportunities for tree and hedge planting on the land it controls / owns. MB to obtain councillors' input following the next UPC meeting.
- UPEG requests UPC's support in encouraging parishioners to plant trees in their gardens; UPEG to source the plants.

ClIr Mark Botham

ii. Urchfont Tree Works Update

Just a quick reminder where we are and how we have got here, back in April we had a full tree survey carried out by Jonathan Astill from Astill Treecare. In the report he highlighted a number of trees that needed attention. Will Corke from Green Farm Tree Care was asked to submit a quotation for the high risk and medium works. The quotation for the works came in at the sum £1900. It was decided that the high risk works needed to be carried out ASAP, so UPC granted Will the task of felling the tree on the Paddock Green. As the remainder of the works quoted for was over the sum of £1000 and in line with UPC protocol we need to obtain at least 2 other quotations.

For the past several months I have been trying to engage with a number of local tree surgeons. The companies that I have contacted are.

- **Will Corke:** Green Farm Tree Care - quotation submitted
- **Ian Pocock:** He declined to quote.
- **Michael Burns:** Rowan Trees Survey - had no response as yet.
- **Adam Lonsdale:** Wiltshire Countryside Service - meeting has been planned for the 4th Dec with ClIr Creasey to walk through the report.
- **Tom Ashpole:** Wiltshire Tree Care - no response as yet.
- **M J Scoffield;** M J Scoffield Tree Care - awaiting response

Next step is to await Wiltshire Countryside Service to quote if they wish to and keep chasing and contacting local companies.

I will provide a verbal update at the meeting.

ClIr Steven Cottle

iii. UPC Highways Report

Our Parish Steward has been active, having cleared the Autumn leaf fall from the pavement alongside Farmer's Field, and assisting the Sewer team in clearing stubborn blocked drains on the B3098 adjacent to the same, and also at Crook's Lane. There is much still outstanding on the list from our June report, which we will be updating in December . We will be seeking a meeting with Wiltshire Highways to progress matters following our updated survey. Richard Dobson has agreed to look at verge repairs opposite Pond Green.

Cllrs. Martyn Hollyman and Mark Botham

APPENDIX 2 TO THE DECEMBER 2020 UPC FC AGENDA

The final budget for 21/22 will be presented for approval at the March 2021 meeting when more accurate 20/21 spend figures will be available. However, the indicative budget presented below, based on actual / predicted spend data as at 30th November 2020, is intended solely for the determination and approval of the PRECEPT demand to be made to WC in January 2021.

ACCOUNT	Budget 20/21	Forecast / Actual Spend	Suggested Indicative Budget 21/22	Variances 21/22 to 20/21 Budgets
Fixed Costs	£ 19,321.00	£ 18,320.45	£ 19,657.31	NALC annual salary increase + inflation
Running Costs	£ 22,435.00	£ 20,518.24	£ 22,403.74	Maintenance & Litter Bin Contract Increases Year 4; Increased Waste Collection Charges; increased electricity costs; increased water charges; no tree surveys, inclusion of bi-annual domain costs; inflation where appropriate
Sub-Total Fixed & Running Costs	£ 41,756.00	£ 38,838.69	£ 42,061.05	
Projects	£ 42,719.00	£ 36,881.79	£ 1,000.00 £ 1,380.00 £ 300.00 £ 1,000.00 £ 10,000.00 £ 5,000.00	UPEG Estimated requirements (MK/KC) Urchfont Pond Running Cost Requirements (MB) Potential 2021 Election Costs (Printing etc) (BL) Playground Repair Requirements (MK) Verge / Highway Repairs Requirement (MB/MH) Allowance for additional project requirements (BL)
Projects Total			£ 18,680.00	
Fianncial Assistance	£ 4,000.00	£ 1,500.00	£ 4,000.00 £ 1,000.00	Unchanged Ring Fenced budget for carbon reduction measures proposed by UPEG
TOTALS	£ 88,475.00	£ 77,220.48	£ 65,741.05	

Likely Funding Available for 21/22	
Indicative Reserve at 31/3/21 as at 30/11/20 including Small Business Grant	£ 15,982.41
Estimated VAT to be reclaimed but not yet received as at 30/11/20	£ 3,000.00
LESS AGREED RESERVE AT 31/3/22	-£ 13,500.00
TOTAL FUNDS AVAILABLE	£ 5,482.41
FUNDING DEFICIT: suggested indicative budget to funding predicted to be available (as at 30/11/20)	-£ 60,258.64

PLUS CIL ACCOUNT as at 30/11/20	£ 22,835.08
Plus CIL expected in 21/22	£ 6,986.27
TOTAL CIL FUNDS expected within 21/22	£ 29,821.35

EXAMPLE PRECEPT DEMAND DATA - Tax Base increased from 544.15 to 552.46				
	Demand to WC	Effect on Council Tax Band D	Band D Rate 21/22 per annum	Variance on 20/21 Band D rate of £93.38 per annum
Leave demand as for 20/21	£50,812.73	-1.50	£ 91.98	a decrease of £1.40 per annum
Increase Demand to:	£51,828.98	0.46	£ 93.81	an increase of £0.43 per annum
	£52,103.50	1.00	£ 94.31	an increase of £0.93 per annum
	£52,621.82	2.00	£ 95.25	an increase of £1.87 per annum
	£56,748.69	10.00	£ 102.72	an increase of £9.34 per annum
	£60,294.99	16.88	£ 109.14	an increase of £15.76 per annum