

UPLOWMAN PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk to the Council : Robert Hodgson
Lower Beer,
Uplowman,
Tiverton EX16 7PF
Tel: 01884-821239
E-mail : UplowmanPC@btconnect.com

12 January 2025

All Parish Councillors

Dear Councillors,

UPLOWMAN PARISH COUNCIL - NOTICE OF MEETING THURSDAY 16th January 2025, at 7.30pm IN UPLOWMAN VILLAGE HALL

The next meeting of this Council will be on **THURSDAY 16th January 2025 IN THE VILLAGE HALL, UPLOWMAN**, starting at 7.30pm.

I attach a list of updates and proposals for decision, which I hope will be useful. Our main consideration this meeting should be to finalise the budget for next year and set the precept. I attach both the draft budget considered last time and our reserves policy, which is overdue a review.

The UPC subscription to Devon Association of Local Councils is usually deducted from the precept and forwarded by MDDC to DALC. Item 4.4 asks that you (a) confirm UPC's continuing membership of DALC and (b) confirm that the subscription may be collected by MDDC in this way.

A list of notes on agenda items is attached. Please see note regarding the Community Newsletter, for which a stand-in editor is urgently required!

I have booked the hall for the following dates in 2025 (all Thursdays): 20 March, 15 May, 17 July, 18 Sept and 20 Nov.

Yours sincerely,

Robert

Robert Hodgson (Clerk to Uplowman Parish Council)

UPLOWMAN PARISH COUNCIL
AGENDA FOR MEETING on THURSDAY 16th JANUARY 2025
To be held in Uplowman Village Hall, starting at 7.30pm

The meeting will start with an open session, when parishioners may raise matters of concern.

1. Attendance & Apologies for absence.
2. Reports from DCC and MDDC.
3. Minutes of last meeting (21 November 2024).
3.1 Matters arising from Minutes of previous meeting not covered elsewhere.
4. Finance and procedures
 - 4.1 Current position :

Bank balance at last meeting :	£5067.53
Income since last meeting	£0.00
Expenditure authorised on 21 Nov	£1006.80
Current balance (note, £25 not cashed yet):	£4,060.73
 - 4.2 Payments for approval:
A P Hayman, grass cutting (£36.00)
R Hodgson, Clerk's expenses (£9.55)
 - 4.3 Budget 2025-6 and confirm reserves policy
 - 4.4 Set precept for 2025-6 and confirm that DAPC subscription may be deducted from precept.
5. Planning
 - 5.1 24/00878/PNCOU: Stonebridge, change of use of Ag Bldg. MDDC rejected application
 - 5.2 23/019165/FULL, Redwoods, convert to dwellings. Has been appealed
 - 5.3 24/01033/MFUL: Hill Farm, erect dairy cattle shed. UPC raised no objection. Decision awaited
 - 5.4 24/01741/FULL : Sweetings, erect barn, UPC no objection, devcision awaited
6. Community Projects and matters.
 - 6.1 Supporting the Redwoods Inn development.
 - 6.2 Parish Website: update
 - 6.3 Registration of gov.uk domain and emails
 - 6.4 Possible repeat of part-funded first aid training for parishioners
 - 6.5 Additional editors needed for Uplowman Community newsletter
7. Environment & Healthy living
 - 7.1 Taking a lead on reducing Uplowman's carbon footprint
8. Correspondence (See attached list plus any correspondence received after this notice)
 - 8.1 Environment, SWW, etc:
 - 8.2 Local Plans and Surveys.
 - 8.3 General Correspondence
 - 8.4 Village projects
9. Hall & Recreation Association Report
10. Emergency Planning & Neighbourhood Watch
11. Parish Roads/Paths.
 - 11.1 Signage to reduce use of Whitnage Lane by large vehicles.
 - 11.2 Flooding at stream – communications with DCC and proposal to add to community risk register
12. Date of next meeting (Thursday 20th March 2025).

CORRESPONDENCE SINCE LAST MEETING (21 Nov 2024)

5. Finances

Ser No	Date received	From/to	Subject	Date replied/sent
935	28/11/24	UPCC	Receipt for donation to graveyard	
936	04/12/24	Mid D Mob	Receipt for donation	
937	06/12/24	Nat West	Statement, bal=£4923.53	
938	07/01/25	Cit Adv	Receipt for donation	
939	07/01/25	P A Hayman	Invoice for grass cutting, £36.00	
940	07/01/25	Nat West	Statement, bal=£4085.73	

6. PLANNING & LICENSING

Ser No	Date received	From/to	Subject	Date replied/sent
1035	21/11/24	MDDC	24/00878/PNCOU: Stonebridge change use to residential - refused	
1036	12/12/24	MDDC	24/01741/FULL : Sweetings, erect barn, UPC no object	07/01/25

7.1 ENVIRONMENT, including Sewerage, Recycling, Roads & rivers, Healthy living

Ser No	Date received	From/to	Subject	Date replied/sent
428	21/11/24	DCC	Comments on speed restriction in Uplowman	
429	06/12/25	DCC	Dragonpatcher not currently available	
430	18/12/24	DCC	Will investigate flooding issue	

7.2 LOCAL PLANS & SURVEYS, including HRA

Ser No	Date received	From/to	Subject	Date replied/sent
343	25/11/24	Cllr Westcott	Info on grants for decarboinising hall, forwarded to Cllr Moore	25/11/25
344	02/12/24	DC Resilience For	Survey on resilience training needs–snow, flood, road wardens?	
355	03/12/24	MDDC	Parish risk register	

7.3 GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

Ser No	Date received	From/to	Subject	Date replied/sent
1769	20/11/24	DALC	Newsletter, reminder of survey on remote meetings	
1770	27/11/24	Cllr Moore	Guide to setting up .gov.uk domain, etc	
1771	29/11/24	Cit Advice	Request for funds and flier for volunteer, put in newsletter	
1772	05/12/24	DALC	Invitation to meet the DCC Leader, forwarded	
1773	09/12/24	CHAT	Request for funds	
1774	12/12/24	1st aid train'g SW	Reminder that 2022 certificates about to expire	

7.5 Village projects.

Ser No	Date received	From/to	Subject	Date replied/sent
380	17/12/24	Tristan Donald	Website update, forwarded	
381	20/12/24	DCC	Have discussed broadband with openreach. Will update later.	

UPDATES AND DECISIONS NEEDED

Item 4.3 Reserves policy

The reserves policy was agreed in 2016, when a general reserve of £3500, broken down as in the attached document, was considered appropriate and sufficient. The present financial reserve is below this level and the budget presented aims to restore the reserve by end of next financial year. The policy should be reviewed regularly and this item is for that to be done.

Item 4.4 Budget 2025-6

The draft budget was discussed in November., It was agreed that all councillors would consider what projects they would like to complete in 2025-6 and whether funding from the precept would be required. If UPC wishes to proceed with obtaining a .gov.uk domain (see 6.3) then cost should be added. The budget must be finalised at this meeting to enable a precept request to be submitted to MDDC in the coming week.

Item 6.1: Redwoods Inn

No news. UPC has not been informed of any decision re. Appeal against refusal of poermission for change of use.

Item 6.2: Parish Website

Tristan has been working on it. More details being sought.

Item 6.3: gov.uk domain

Councillors were to review the info in the link sent by Cllr Moore. Decision needed on way forward. Any cost to be added to precept. The recommended form of a domain address would be uplowman-pc.gov.uk.

Item 6.4 First Aid Training

In 2022 UPC provided 50% funding for individuals in the parish wishing to take training for 'Emergency First Aid at Work. The costs at that time were £40 per participant, of which UPC paid half, and 18 participants were trained. The training provider has reminded us that the 3-year certification expires shortly and wonders if UPC would wish to repeat the training.

Item 6.5 Uplowman Community Newsletter

The January newsletter will be our 100th edition. The News was started during the pandemic as a mechanism for communicating within the parish. It goes to most of the homes in the parish and several addresses on the edges of neighbouring parishes. There is currently no cost to UPC beyond the annual subscription to membermojo, which also permits UPC to maintain a GDPR-compliant secure database of Parishioner addresses and other details. The newsletter circulates on the 15th day of each month.

Every edition since the end of the pandemic has been put together by Robert. However, there will be occasions (notably the next edition in February) when Robert is not available to do it. Councillors are asked to consider (a) whether the news continues to filfill a useful role and (b) if yes, then suggest names of possible alternative editors who might assist.

11.1 Whitnage Lane signage

no further news

11.2 Flooding at stream

Cllr Moore has contacted DCC and will report on correspondence wth Meg Booth, who heads up the Highways department. MDDC has been developing a district-wide risk register of local hazards and it is proposed that UPC add the risk of flooding in the village to that register.

UPLOWMAN PARISH COUNCIL RESERVES POLICY

The policy is based on best practice that a council should have the following reserves:

- A small general reserve to cover unforeseen or foreseeable events.
- An election reserve to cover the costs of a contested election
- A legal & professional fees reserve to cover incidental or unforeseen costs
- A locum clerk cost reserve
- A maintenance reserve

The General Reserve

All councils should have a small basic general reserve. This should be proportionate to the activities that the council undertakes and the risks associated with those activities. Expenditure is not always incurred evenly throughout the year. There may be significant cost peaks at certain times of the year. These cost peaks should be considered when reviewing the adequacy of the general reserve.

The Election Reserve

In a democracy one thing is certain: elections. As elections are entirely foreseeable it is best practice to provide for their cost. The minimum reserve would be the cost of one contested election. The cost of elections varies widely between principal authorities. It is best practice to contact the principal authority monitoring officer to establish the current amount that would be charged in the event of an election, contested or otherwise. Whether a council has an election reserve for more than 1 election will vary from council to council. The more councillors a council has, the greater the chance that there will be a casual vacancy. It is best practice that the council's risk assessment should review the frequency with which casual vacancies have occurred and then ensure that the election reserve is adequate.

The Legal & Professional Fees Reserve

Insurance and membership of a County Association of Local Councils is not an adequate substitute for competent legal or professional advice when it is needed. This is especially the case regarding land, property and employment. Failure to get good advice in these instances can be very expensive. Professional costs are not proportionate to the size of the council. Legal costs may be the same irrespective of the size of the council. An adequate legal and professional fee reserve may be proportionately larger for a small council as opposed to that for a large town council. Deciding on an appropriate amount for the reserve is very difficult. Parish council decisions are not immune from judicial review. It may cost tens of thousands of pounds to be represented at such a review or an employment tribunal. Councils may also wish to have legal representation at planning inquiries, yet the failure to provide for the costs may deprive the council and its electors of an adequate voice.

The locum clerk cost reserve

Clerks are human, they get ill, die, leave suddenly and so forth. A council MUST have a proper officer, an untrained councillor acting as clerk effectively deprives the community of an elected representative. The loss or prolonged unavailability of the clerk should be considered in detail on the council's risk assessment. It is best practice to have a specific

locum clerk cost reserve which covers the cost of hiring a temporary replacement clerk for between 3 and 6 months.

The maintenance reserve

If a council has any interest in land or property it is best practice to have a maintenance reserve. Whether the property or land is let is immaterial as the tenant may fail to meet their obligations regarding the upkeep of the property. In such circumstances the council may be left a substantial bill to repair the property. It is suggested best practice that the reserve be sufficient to cover remedial repairs, urgent maintenance and emergency damage whilst the insurance situation is assessed.

General and Specific Reserves

A Specific Reserve is as its name implies a reserve solely for that specific purpose. A transfer between such reserves requires a decision to be made by the council. These Reserves are an accounting method to ring fence funds for specific projects. In the case of this Parish Council the amounts assessed are not a Specific Reserve but a General Reserve and as such do not require a transfer decision. They are an indicative amount to assess an overall level of general reserve but it is still important that this overall level is reviewed each year.

Uplowman Parish Council Reserves

Based on best practice it is determined that the Council should have an overall General Reserve based on the following build up:

A small general reserve to cover unforeseen events	£
500	
An election reserve to cover the costs of a contested election	£ 900
A legal & professional fees reserve to cover incidental or unforeseen costs	£ 600
A locum clerk cost reserve	£
500	
A maintenance reserve:	
Leat repairs where no landowner/emergency	£ 500
Repairs to assets re bus shelter/noticeboard/telephone box	£ 500
£1000	
Total Reserve required	£3500

Policy adopted on..... Signed Chair.....

UPLOWMAN PARISH COUNCIL

11 Jan 2025

Actual Annual Expenditure 2023-25 (rounded to nearest £) and Budget 2025-26

Figures for current year are estimated	2023 to 2024		2024 to 2025		2025 to 2026	
Item	Actual		Estimate		Budget	
Precept	3500		3950		4500	
Grants and other income	184 90		225		225	
HM Customs, VAT rebate	2049		1930		284	
Clerks' Salary		1500		1600		1700
Clerk's expenses / admin		118		386		120
Chairman's/other's expenses		0		0		0
Hall Hire for regular meetings		96		96		96
Training & outside meetings		78		0		50
Insurance		162		162		162
Commun Projects /trim trail++		24185		949		600
Parish Social		0		200		250
Devon Ass of PCs sub		98		144		150
Grass cutting/tree cutting/fence		549		1145		750
Election (May 2023)		127		0		0
Churchyard support		350		350		350
Support local charities		100		100		100
TOTAL	24039	27363	6105	5132	5009	4328

+ DAPC subscription was deducted at source since 2000-2001. These figs adjusted as if it were not.

++ Annual donations of £225 are received for upkeep of Trim Trail. Funding for any stream work is not included

Current year is estimated. Audit fees of £252 (included in admin) were paid in 2024 but there will be no charge for Annual Audit as gross turnover 2024-5 is less than £25000.

NOTE : A PRECEPT OF £1000 IS EQUIVALENT TO A COUNCIL TAX OF £6.07 ON A BAND 'D' PROPERTY IN UPLOWMAN.

This estimate predicts undesignated cash in hand at year-end March 2025 to be £2857 (82% of planned reserves after (a) adding VAT to be reclaimed (£284) and (b) discounting funds held and designated for trimtrail maintenance (£342). This proposed budget would reinstate the reserves shortfall by year end 2026.