

**MINAL PARISH COUNCIL**  
**Minutes of the Meeting Held on 9 March 2020**  
**At 6.30pm in the Village Hall**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>1. Present:</b><br>Brian Devonshire – Vice Chairman<br>Chris Webb<br>Ruth Kolish<br>Anna Whitehead<br>Guy Gagen<br>Rob Bailey | <b>Apologies Accepted from:</b><br>John Bevan<br><br><b>In Attendance:</b><br>Sue Hine Clerk/RFO |
|--|--|

**Declarations of Interest:** None

The meeting was chaired by Brian Devonshire, Vice Chair

**2. Questions from the Public:**

The Clerk had received an email from Adam Slater in Church Lane about the blocked drains at the top of Church Lane and in front of his property. The Clerk wanted to clarify that the drains at the top are on Wiltshire County Council's priority list for clearing and were cleared in the Autumn. RB confirmed this and also stated that Thames Water had inspected and recently cleared the drain pipes where the Private Road and Church Lane join as the road is to be re-surfaced. It was agreed that the exceptionally wet weather has exacerbated an already difficult situation and the clerk will contact the Gully team to advise. Mr Slater also stated that the ash trees in the Church car park are getting large and the Clerk will get some quotes for pruning them. **Action: Clerk**

**3. Minutes of the meeting held on the 13 January 2020**

The Minutes were approved and signed by the Vice-Chairman.

**4. Matters Arising – See separate Matters Arising and Actions List.**

**5. Rights of Way.**

The new gates have been fitted and BD thanked Graham Hobbs who had worked in very wet and cold weather to install them. BD and the Clerk are in touch with Ramsbury Estates about the gates along the Werg – Stitchcombe path and it is hoped these will be fitted soon.

WCC have received an application to record a restricted byway which crosses footpaths in the Ramsbury, Axford and Mildenhall Parish areas. The application refers to Axford Lane and contains a number of historical references in the documentation. WCC are inviting evidence to support or rebut the application. Concern was expressed about incurring costs re-opening a byway that will be little used when there are other paths (Ram9B, Mild 16 and Rams44 and 52). RK and Clerk will attempt to walk the route and report back. The Clerk has contacted Ramsbury Estates but not received a reply to date and will contact Ramsbury PC to ask their view as this encroaches on footpaths in both parishes. **Action: RK, Clerk**

## 6. Damaged bus stop sign and potholes

The bus stop sign outside the village Hall has been knocked over and appears to have happened the same night that the village hall car park sign was damaged. It is not sure whether this was the weather or an accident as the bus stop sign is very rusty at the base. The Clerk will report this to the bus company Stage Coach West.

RK has identified many potholes on the main route through Mildenhall which the Clerk will send to WCC. The Parish Steward is able to cold fill potholes on minor roads and RK and AW will identify them on the minor roads. **Action: Clerk, RK and AW**

## 7. Playground.

The work identified in the Inspection report has now been carried out. GG and BD commented that the trees at the bottom of the playground are getting large. As this borders the main road the Clerk will check if this is the responsibility of WCC. There are now a lot of composted grass clippings in the bins at the base of the playground which could be use to make a plant area. The Clerk reported that bee friendly plants could be planted here. BD also said that the Avenue Day Nursery may like to use the area for planting with the children.

The playground will require ongoing maintenance as it ages and BD and CW stated that the Avenue Day Nursery are the largest users of the playground during the day. BD proposed a motion that the PC ask the day nursery for a contribution towards the cost of running the playground. The Clerk reported that the Association of Local Councils state that this would not be enforceable. There was some discussion around this with some Councillors feeling that this was an entirely appropriate use for the playground. A vote was taken and the motion was approved 4:2. **Action: Clerk and BD**

## 8. WCC Green Space and Infrastructure Survey

WCC is carrying out a survey of green spaces in each parish. Clerks are being asked to verify current space allocations and Parish Councils are being asked if further areas for leisure/wildlife could be identified in parishes. There is also a public questionnaire which the Clerk has mentioned in the Minal newsletter. WCC have provided A2 size maps and Councillors studied these. The Clerk has also contacted the neighbourhood planning team who have recently carried out a similar survey. Councillors approved reclassifying the bank behind Chopping Knife Lane as Natural Green Space (Limited Access) and following the Neighbourhood plan advice to record the cricket pitch as requiring further protection as Community Amenity space. **Action: Clerk**

The Clerk had attended a Marlborough in Transition Meeting on behalf of Councillors on Thursday 5 March. The Chair, Milly Carmichael, had invited a number of local wildlife and environmental organisations, councils, gardening groups etc to discuss allocating wildlife corridors in the area to allow bees and other insects to flourish. The idea is that areas in towns and the country along so called bee lines are set aside for planting insect friendly plants. A farmer on the Marlborough Downs spoke about creating a wildlife area and the importance of increasing the bee population to ensure crops are pollinated. A bee keeper

stated that his bees in London had produced more honey than here and this was partially due to the use of the land for crops whereas in towns there is an increasing focus on providing roof gardens, park areas and other bee friendly places. Some ideas were discussed by the group. This work tallies with WCC audit of green space areas. Some examples of projects would be verges planted with wild flowers rather than grass and areas of public space such as parks and playgrounds having small garden areas. More information can be found on the following website. <https://www.buglife.org.uk/our-work/b-lines/b-lines-south-east/>

## 9. Planning

There were no new applications and the Clerk reported that Ash Close Garden Room application 19/12021/FUL had been approved and that work to the trees in The Cottage, Church Lane had been carried out.

## 10. Village Hall

RB reported that new windows had been fitted to the village hall and the heating system can now be operated remotely. The Village hall usage has increased making these improvements possible. There was some discussion about using the meeting room for PC meetings to free up the main hall but it was agreed that the space was too small and would not allow room for public attendees. RB will talk to the Martial Arts Class club about other options. RB also reported that Clive Scholefield, Chair of the Sports and Social Club, has received a letter from the Gale Trust land agent regarding the usage of the sports pitch. It was noted that social and sporting activities for the village have been carried out on this land for a number of years but the land agents appear to be saying this could be in breach of the agreement. There was no action to be taken currently but Councillors agreed to keep a watch on this and support the Sports and Social Club's position regarding usage of the land for village events.

## 11. Responsible Financial Officer's (Clerk's) Reports

Councillors approved the financial statement and the accounts were signed by Councillor RK. The Clerk reported that the approved precept had been applied for and will be paid in the usual way. The Clerk drew attention to the outstanding amount owed to Idverde for the bins and bin emptying. The Clerk has been chasing an up to date bill for 4 months so that it can be paid in this financial year. There appears to be a problem with the depots and the head office in Coventry.

The Clerk has received a letter from HSBC bank stating that all business accounts are under review and require an hour's telephone review.

The Clerk reported that Charlotte Hitchmough from ARK (Action from the River Kennet) had given a talk at the Gardening Club's February meeting about the work of ARK and in particular the river running through Mildenhall. The Clerk had discussed supporting ARK with John Bevan who suggested Councillors consider becoming a member with a suitable donation. Councillors approved a donation of £50 to ARK.

**Action: Clerk**

**12. Area Board**

BD reported that understanding how to take measures against cyber crime is still a priority and will provide some information to RB who is compiling the next Minal News. BD is considering applying for a grant in 2020/21 for the second phase of the stiles project. The Clerk will work with BD on the figures. **Action Clerk and BD**

**13. VE Day**

RB reported that the event is going ahead and will start at 2.00pm.

**14. Any Other Business**

The Clerk is meeting with Chris Franklin on Thursday 12 March regarding some changes to the front page and access arrangements.

**Best Kept Village Competition**

BD asked if this competition was running this year and the Clerk confirmed that the application had just been received. As we have improved our footpaths and launched Minal News it was considered worth applying this year. **Action: Clerk**

**Meeting closed at 8.00pm – next meeting Monday 11 May 2020**