

MINAL PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Remote Meeting Held on 9 November 2020

1. Present:

John Bevan – Chairman
Brian Devonshire – Vice Chair
Rob Bailey – Vice Chair
Ruth Kolish
Anna Whitehead
Guy Gagen

Apologies Accepted:

None

In Attendance:

Jane Davies (County Councillor)
Sue Hine Clerk/RFO

Declarations of Interest: None

This meeting was held remotely via Zoom in accordance with the Coronavirus Pandemic Regulations 2020.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on the 14 September 2020

The Minutes were approved and will be signed at a later date by the Chairman.

3. Matters Arising – These had been circulated. The actions that have been able to be carried out during the pandemic are transferred to Agenda items.

4. Questions from Members of the Public

No members of the public attended the meeting. A request had been received from a parishioner after publication of the Agenda and was discussed in Any Other Business Item 15.2. Electric Charging point.

5. Kingfisher Cottage, The Werg

John Bevan reported that the condition of this property continued to deteriorate and asked County Councillor Jane Davies whether the owners could be contacted via WCC records. After clarifying that the property was not listed JD ruled out compulsory purchase. There was some discussion as to whether the electricity was still connected but BD reported that a gardener attends to keep the gardens tidy. Jane Davies suggested Environmental Health could be contacted to inspect the condition of the property. It was agreed to ask Deirdre and Malcolm Watson in the neighbouring property to ask the gardener for the contact details of the owner. Subsequent to the meeting BD suggested the Clerk contact the Land Registry to verify ownership. **Action: Clerk**

6. Covid 19 Lockdown 2 Parish Support

Support has been advertised on the Facebook page, village hall poster and RB has written to the Covid volunteers. All have come back happy to offer help again. Andrew Jack, who has returned as Area Board co-ordinator, has organised a Microsoft Teams meeting for the Marlborough area support groups on Thursday 12 November at 6.00pm and RB and RK will dial in.

7. Bridleways and Footpaths – Issue re the Sports field

Following an issue with a dog walker during a match the Clerk and JB have been working with Clive Schofield, chair of the Sports and Social Committee. It is proposed to improve the signage of the paths and share the costs with the Sports and Social Club and this was approved by Councillors. JB also proposed purchasing some way markers and new posts for other locations. There is sufficient in the maintenance of footpath budget for this and Councillors approved the proposal. **Action: JB**

8. Bridleways and Footpaths Stiles Project Phase 2

JB congratulated Brian Devonshire and the Clerk for their work on achieving a second grant to improve Mild 15 which leads from Marlborough to Stitchcombe at the top of the hill. Following the meeting it was reported that Graham Hobbs was fitting the new Werg gates (Phase 1) on 10 November. **Action: Clerk and BD**

9. Playground Inspection and Works

The Clerk reported that she has spent considerable time trying to find a contractor to fix the mound logs and to undertake remedial works following the 2020 inspection. Sutcliffe agreed to replace the rotten logs and these have been delivered to Brian Devonshire. Many contractors have said that they no longer use these posts as they do not last so a more durable solution is required. The Clerk has contacted several playground-maintenance companies but they are not locally based and usually specialise in a particular manufacturer which makes them expensive. Some require you to sign up to monthly plans which do not include parts and the annual legal inspection is extra. The register for Annual Playground Inspectors is quite small and our Inspector is reasonable and experienced with Sutcliffe equipment. The Clerk had obtained a quote from the installer of our playground SJ Aplin based in Chippenham and recommended this to Councillors. Councillors approved parts 1 and 3 of the quote – to repair the posts for the tunnel and to carry out the remedial works. It was agreed that BD and the Clerk would meet with Steve Aplin regarding part 2 of the quote to provide a more durable solution to the upright posts decorating the mound. **Action: Clerk and BD**

10. Grass Bins in the Playground

The grass bins are overflowing at the bottom of the playground. It had originally been suggested by BD that this could form a garden for children but the volume of grass cuttings is not suitable compost. JB had been in correspondence with Sir Nigel Thompson regarding the original arrangements for grass cutting removal. The previous informal arrangement had broken down some time ago and the bins now store grass cuttings from around the village not just the playground. JB proposed a green bin from WCC. BD asked whether there was a more local solution and GG said that he would talk to Mike Sinden about removing the grass cuttings for his land. Councillors preferred and approved this more local solution. **Action: GG**

11. Parish Land Trees

The Clerk reported that the planning permission had been sent to WCC but that they had requested a plan which was strange as they had sent a plan of the

conservation area to the Clerk. Mike Holmes is hoping to attend the week commencing 15 December. Subsequent to the meeting WCC have advised that applications take 6 weeks and therefore the work will be in the New Year.

The Clerk raised the question of responsibility for the trees on parish land. At the last meeting Ruth Kolish had stated that the Council should be regularly inspecting and risk assessing trees. The Clerk was particularly concerned about the trees on the bank by the playground as this is on a fairly main road. BD said that previously WCC have pruned these trees. However, the Clerk expects that the Parish Council owns this land following the transfer from Kennet District Council and the responsibility would now fall to the Parish Council. The Clerk has checked the files and not been able to locate the transfer deed. JB suggested contacting Sir Nigel Thompson and there was some discussion about the cost of an arborist following the recent quotes. AW and RK stated that our responsibility is to carry out due diligence and that this was sufficient for insurance purposes. The Clerk will contact Sir Nigel to clarify the land position and find a tree surveyor/arborist. **Action: Clerk**

12. Planning Applications

Planning applications considered during this period were 20/08370/FUL Rectory Cottage Revised Roofline – no objection 20/08610/FUL and 20/08998/LBC Garden Room Fishermen’s cottage - no objection.

13. Responsible Finance Officer’s Report and AGAR

The Clerk had prepared and sent the financial statement and a breakdown of expenditure against budget plus a screen print of the balances which were approved. The Clerk reported that although the Council has had unexpected expenses this year the expected increases mean that the Council is still within its budget. This is due to savings in other areas. AW asked that the Clerk send the Financial statements earlier in future. The Clerk expressed concern that unexpected expenses had altered the budget eg trees etc but Councillors agreed that the nature of work means that unexpected expenses come up. The Council has built up sufficient reserves to meet unexpected demands and Councillors approved keeping the precept at £20,000.

The Clerk has received notification of acceptance of our Certificate of Exemption from the auditors meaning no audit is necessary. Due to an administrative error further emails were then sent contradicting this so the Clerk telephoned and this was corrected.

The Clerk reported ongoing problems with Idverde in invoicing for the bin collections. There were also problems last year resulting in us receiving a free bin but the Head Office invoicing system appears not to work well with the local depots.

Action: Clerk to resolve problems with Idverde or consider an alternative supplier, Clerk and BD to prepare budget

14. Website

RB reported that phase 1 of the process for setting up the website is complete and Netwise are building our website. The Clerk has been pulling off

information from the old website for Phase 2 adding content. Launch date should be around Christmas. AW asked if CW had agreed to allow his photos to be on the new website. RK said that she would ask him and subsequent to the meeting confirmed that CW happy to reuse his photos. **Action: Clerk, RB and RK**

15. Any Other Business

15.1 Identity Fraud

Guy Gagen reported a case of identity fraud which was orchestrated by a clever criminal gang. The Clerk suggested he write a short piece for Facebook feed and website to alert people which Councillors approved. **Action: GG**

15.2 Request for Electric Charging Point

The Clerk has received a request for an electric charging point in the village possibly at the village hall. The proposer had sent some information but it was detailed and there was no particular financial breakdown. Councillors discussed this and feel that in the future this may well be a consideration as the UK moves towards electric cars. GG advised that the technology is moving very fast. County Councillor Jane Davies said that WCC are currently considering their approach. Many issues are involved in terms of the position of points on private land, who pays for the electricity and identifying the community to serve. The current grants are usually based on numbers of users. RB, also chair of the Village hall advised that the Village Hall Committee are unlikely to approve this. The costs involved for a small parish council with only one request concerned Councillors and it was agreed to wait for guidance from WCC and not proceed on this matter. It was suggested that the individual use the charging points in George Lane carpark and Tesco's store in Marlborough. **Action: Clerk to write to parishioner**

15.3 Vacancy for Councillor

JB reported that Adam Slater had decided not to join the PC. BD reminded the PC that elections were due in May 2021. GG suggested that we advertise before then. Clerk to draft ad for Facebook page, Minal News, Website and Noticeboard. **Action: Clerk**

Meeting finished at 7.50pm – next meeting Monday 11 January 2021