

## MINAL PARISH COUNCIL

### Minutes of the Annual General Meeting Held on 12 July 2021 At 6.30pm in the Village Hall

1. **Present:**  
 John Bevan - Chairman  
 Brian Devonshire – Vice Chairman  
 Rob Bailey – Vice Chairman  
 Anna Whitehead  
 Guy Gagen  
 Lucy Kirkpatrick  
 Adam Kebble
- Apologies Accepted from:**  
None
- In Attendance:**  
 Sue Hine Clerk/RFO  
 Clive Schofield, Sports & Social Club  
 Mike & Corinne Ashby  
 Martin Ephson  
 Caroline Thomas, County Councillor  
 Don & Anita Barrett  
 Dr Malcolm Exeter
  
2. **Questions from the Public:** None. Members of the public were in attendance for the planning applications on the main PC meeting agenda.
3. **Declarations of Interest:** None
4. **Minutes of the Annual meeting held on the 13 May 2019**  
 There was no Annual meeting in 2020 due to the restrictions of the Covid 19 pandemic. The minutes of the previous AGM on 13 May 2019 were approved and signed accordingly.
5. **Matters Arising:** None
6. **Chairman’s Report for 2020 and 2021 – John Bevan**  
 The outbreak of Covid-19 in March 2020 has had a significant effect on Local Government with many officers having to work from home and communicate with their colleagues by electronic means. We, at Minal Parish Council, have had to do without public meetings since that time, communicating by telephone and Zoom, and today’s meeting is the first open meeting that we have had since the pandemic broke out. It is also the first AGM that we have been able to hold for two years which has given me the opportunity to take stock of what we have accomplished as a Parish Council in that time.  
  
 Firstly, I must mention our initiative in January 2020 to replace many of the broken stiles in the parish with new kissing-gates to enable people of all ages to enjoy the many delightful footpaths in our care. Since then, we have bought and installed 11 of these in different places together with waymarkers and finger-posts - all of which have been greeted with enthusiasm by the general public. We have also caused to be repaired part of the footpath alongside the river near Stitchcombe which now offers unfettered access from Minal to Axford. We have also installed waste bins in various points in the village after a request from a parishioner and these have greatly reduced litter around the village.  
  
 Another significant achievement has been the construction and operation of the new village website which now has a much broader compass than the old one, allowing ready access for all interested parties so that information can be added or deleted at short notice.

Last Autumn, it was noticed that the five mature Ash trees in Church Lane were diseased, and after taking professional advice, the Council decided to have them removed and replaced by four flowering cherry trees kindly donated by Adam Slater. This has all been accomplished with the new trees now planted and flourishing.

Last year, the PCC applied to us to allow a new lavatory and cess-pit to be built on our land in the corner of the church field. We duly agreed to this and the work is now in progress with completion expected next month. It is hoped that the facility will encourage more activities in the church including weddings and visitors.

For the duration of the Covid restrictions, our Playpark has had to be closed, although this did not prevent us from maintaining and inspecting it regularly. Repairs are always needed and currently there is a problem with the zip-wire matting which is being undermined by tree-roots. Our thanks to Brian and Sue for taking charge of this.

Graham Hobbs has been mowing the grass in the village and looking after the churchyard for many years and we owe him a large debt of gratitude. He has recently asked to be relieved of these duties. The disposal of grass cuttings is now more difficult with environmental measures. After a lot consideration of different contractors and possible solutions the work has been given to David Pittams from Woodlands Farm who offers a complete service and with whom we hope to have many years of happy collaboration.

The work of maintaining footpaths has continued through the good offices of John Whitehead to whom we owe our special thanks. We have also been fortunate to enjoy once again the services of Robert Copp, contractor from Ramsbury, who has a fine array of machines to cope with every contingency. Rob used to be our regular path-cutting contractor but was forced to withdraw on account of violence offered him by a local farmer. That problem has now been removed and he is working for us again.

Last November, it was brought to our attention that Kingfisher Cottage in The Werg had been empty and neglected for years and was becoming an embarrassment to the village. We traced the owner in America but have not received a reply to our enquiries. We asked the County Council whether a compulsory purchase order could be made. All to no avail and we continue to watch helplessly as this once-loved and cared-for cottage falls into decay.

Finally, I want to thank all fellow-members of Minal Parish Council for their outstanding contribution to the parish and village:

Brian for masterminding the playpark and for procuring several valuable grants towards our footpaths upgrading project.

Rob for organizing the relief work during the pandemic; and also for running the Minal News, the book-exchange and the village hall.

Anna and Guy for sound advice on legal and business matters.

And lastly to Sue, our clerk who, with great energy and enthusiasm, has steered our parish council through the most turbulent of times. She has been our Responsible Finance Officer, website designer and administrative powerhouse: arranging and managing Zoom meetings, organizing the complicated election process and corresponding with the many faces of officialdom. We owe her more than we can say.

## **7. Village Hall Report**

Rob Bailey, Chair of the Village Hall, said that it had been a challenging time for the village hall. The rental income stream had dried up as only the Alzheimer's group were able to continue meeting with special permission from the Government. Rob was able to apply for

some pandemic relief grants from Wiltshire County Council and they had been able to pay all bills and were financially stable. Bookings are now picking up and it is hoped a return to normal operating will continue. The last two years have seen a lot of improvements to the village hall. The hall's insulation was the original 1980's glass insulation and has been upgraded. Together with changing energy supplier and fitting new double-glazed windows to the south and east the energy bills are reducing and visitors are noticing benefits namely cooler in summer and warmer in winter. Rob said that there had been some issues with rain water dispersal and dampness affecting certain areas. He and Jon Napper had inspected the roof and realigned the gutter and a contractor was employed to clear the drain. In 2019, with Jon Napper's help in sourcing a supplier, the railings have been replaced resulting in a smart look to the front of the hall. Work coming up will be replacing the remaining windows and Rob will be approaching the PC for some help later this year. Rob paid tribute to their cleaner, Pauline Barnett who will shortly return to work after a period of illness, and his team Lyn Scholefield, Jon Napper, Lisa Coomber and Susannah Lamb.

## **8. Sports and Social Club Report**

Clive Scholefield, Chairman, reported that the Sports and Social Club AGM was held via Zoom on 21st April 2021 and read out the following report. The Committee is as follows:

Trustee: John Youngs

Trustee: Chris Hurd

Chairman: Clive Scholefield

President: Dom Coomber

Treasurer: Jackie Cook

Secretary: Dave Evans

Members: Richard Cook, Milly Carmichael, Anne Youngs, Nick Beere

2020 activities were severely curtailed by pandemic. No social events. Cricket and youth football seasons interrupted. A loss of £1100 incurred. £7,400 in the bank or cash at January 2021. Social events: fete, bonfire and fireworks, outdoor theatre, bingo are normally significant fund earners. Eg 2019 we made excess income of £300 and that's without the fete.

Significant expense is the maintenance of the field. Accounts are being inspected by Martin Gibson - first time since 2014.

The sports field and buildings are under lease from AW Gale Will Trust. We pay £600 per year. The lease expired in 2014. Representative of the trustees emailed early 2020 apparently querying if we were using the field for the benefit of the village as per lease rules. We think possibly linked to development plans on adjoining Berrycroft field. We responded giving rationale to hiring sports field for cricket and youth football with supporting financial numbers. We asked for a meeting and to renew lease. Nothing further heard.

Marlborough Area Neighbourhood Plan: The Draft plan sent out for consultation in March 2021 had no policy on sport and recreation.

Zoom meeting attended by sport organisations representatives was held - to have this added - still awaited. Note: Minal Sports field aka cricket field has no special protection eg Green space as per playground. Sports field only protected by National Planning Policy whereby areas used for recreational activities should remain for such use. There is a possibility this could be upgraded (but complicated by the fact that the land is privately owned) – to be followed up.

2021: since easing of lockdown we are exceptionally busy. Youth football, cricket, Mikron outdoor theatre, Duck Races, private party, school sports, DofE stopover etc. Most important:

Village Fete and music evening events 24th July- great village coordination and cooperation but lots to be done.

#### **9. Report from the Minal Parish Parochial Church Council**

Gordon Pepper had provided a brief paper summary of the church activities. Gordon has now completed his tenure as Church warden. Rebecca Spicer of Woodlands Farm has recently taken up the post. The church finances remain precarious but a legacy from the late Steven Hurd has provided sufficient income for two years. There remain concerns about the size of the congregation. There is now a service every Sunday at 9.00am. Sarah Musgrave, who is a Licenced Lay Preacher and lives in the village and Rector Chris Smith will be taking most of the services.

#### **10. Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman**

The Clerk stated that the business of the old Council was complete. Turning to the uncontested election on 24 June 2021 the Clerk thanked John Bevan, Brian Devonshire, Rob Bailey, Anna Whitehead and Guy Gagen for their service and for standing again. Comments about the volume of paperwork and ink and subsequent environmental impact as well as the work required for an uncontested election have been made to the County Councillor and to the Elections team at Wiltshire Council. The Clerk said that John Bevan had offered to remain as Chair and asked whether there were any other applicants. Brian Devonshire proposed John Bevan for the post of Chairman and this was seconded by Rob Bailey. The Clerk then asked if Brian Devonshire and Rob Bailey were happy to continue as Co Vice Chairs. Both agreed and Guy Gagen proposed their positions seconded by Anna Whitehead.

#### **11. Election/Co-option of Councillors**

Mildenhall PC is constituted to have 7 Councillors. Following advertising and various personal approaches Lucy Kirkpatrick and Adam Keble had come forward. Lucy and Adam gave a brief summary of their backgrounds and Councillors were unanimous for their co-option. Brian proposed and Rob Bailey seconded.

#### **12. Election Expenses**

The Clerk collected expense forms for submission to WCC. All were for Nil expenses as the election was uncontested and did not require campaigning. Anna Whitehead had completed her forms and sent them directly

#### **13. Election – Code of Conduct. Acceptance of Office and Declaration of Interests**

The Clerk had sent out the Code of Conduct for all Councillors to refresh themselves with the standards expected in public office. All Councillors are required to declare any potential conflicts of interests in the parish they may have that may affect their role and to formally accept the position of Councillor. This question is also asked at the beginning of any meeting. Councillors completed the forms and they were witnessed by the Clerk. The Clerk will add the information to the Wiltshire County Council website.

#### **14. Confirmation of Insurance arrangements.**

Following discussions at the last meeting it had been agreed that our current provider remained competitive and the Clerk has renewed the parish insurance policy.

#### **15. Finance.**

The budget for 2021-22 was approved in March 2021 and this indicated the Council's financial position is currently healthy. An external audit 3 years ago advised building up reserves to at least one year's expenses. The Council also has a lot of upcoming projects to

fund. Councillors approved ongoing subscriptions to Ark, CPRE, WALC, and NALC and a donation was approved to Wiltshire Search and Rescue in May.  
The updated Asset Register and Financial Regulations were approved in March 2021.

#### **16. Review of Policies and Procedures**

The Clerk had brought the current policies to the meeting and these will be reviewed on an ongoing basis. All policies are also on the website.

#### **17. Election of Officers – Councillor Roles**

John Bevan Chairman – Parish Steward Liaison, Finance Committee and overarching role regarding planning, footpaths and highways etc.

Brian Devonshire Vice Chairman – Area Board, Playground, Finance Committee.

Rob Bailey – Vice Chairman - Website, Minal News, Telephone box book exchange. Rob is also Village Hall Chair.

Anna Whitehead – Footpaths (together with John Whitehead for which JB expressed his gratitude for John's liaison with Rob Copp)

Guy Gagen – Trees in the parish. Working with the clerk on a maintenance Programme.

Lucy Kirkpatrick – Cat G Highways representative, Finance Committee forward planning for projects.

Adam Kebble – Emergency Planning for the village and Tree management/liaison with GG.

#### Co-option

Chris Webb, former Councillor acts as Church Liaison and Burials management in conjunction with the Clerk.

Deirdre Watson, former Councillor, parish representative on MANP Marlborough Neighbourhood Plan.

BD also noted that Chris Musgrave who has recently retired would be happy to help the PC with any jobs that need doing.

#### **18. Any Other Business**

None.

Meeting closed at 7.00pm. Next meeting Monday 9 May 2022