

## MINAL PARISH COUNCIL

### Minutes of the Annual General Meeting Held on 9 May 2022 At 6.30pm in the Village Hall

1. **Present:**  
John Bevan - Chairman  
Brian Devonshire – Vice Chairman  
Adam Kebble  
Lucy Kirkpatrick  
Guy Gagen
- Apologies Accepted from:**  
Anna Whitehead, Guy Gagen,  
Rob Bailey, Clive Schofield,  
Caroline Thomas, County Councillor
- In Attendance**  
Sue Hine Clerk/RFO
2. **Questions from the Public:** None. No Members of the public were in attendance
3. **Declarations of Interest:** None
4. **Minutes of the Annual meeting held on the 12 July 2021**  
The minutes were approved and signed accordingly.
5. **Matters Arising:** None

#### 6. **Chairman's Report for 2022 - John Bevan**

Last May we co-opted two new members to our Council, Lucy Kirkpatrick and Adam Kebble, both of whom have made significant contributions to the year's work: Lucy in representing our interest with CatG and initiating a traffic-control scheme at the East end of the village; and Adam with his practical skills and connection with Simon Edwards who is helping us with groundwork in the playground and church car-park.

We also engaged David Pittams to succeed Graham Hobbs as grass-cutting contractor in the churchyard and green spaces in the village. This has been very satisfactory particularly as David has been able to dispose of the green waste that he generates which had hitherto been a problem for the parish.

The playpark, originally sold to us by Kennet District Council for £1, has continued to delight and confound at the same time. It enjoys a great reputation and visitors come from far and wide, but the ongoing maintenance costs are huge and if it wasn't for the enterprising work of Brian and Sue in raising grants from various charities, we may well have had to settle for a less ambitious facility. I want to thank them both for keeping the playground open and active.

The new Minal Website has been a great success although it was found necessary to pay for an upgrade in recent months in order to handle the increasing amounts of data and email traffic which passes through its portal.

During the year the Neighbourhood Plan was finally published and we can only hope that it helps to preserve the more sensitive areas of local countryside from urban development.

In January of this year, a full survey was carried out by local arboriculturist Sarah Duckworth on trees belonging to the Parish Council. As a result, we now have a guide document for the management of our trees in future.

The year has been overshadowed by two large Planning Applications which threaten to have a large impact on the lives of local people. The first, which lies entirely within our parish boundary, is the Rabley Equestrian Centre which has been the centre of a long-running planning dispute and enforcement. We have no objection to the equestrian business as such, but have taken a resolute stand in support of the Enforcement Order, arranging for the application to be called in, and sending our vice-chairman to speak at the planning meeting in December. Thanks to this and the strong evidence presented by our County Councillor, Caroline Thomas, the application was rejected by a single vote. However, very predictably, the owners have now lodged an appeal against the Council's decision, and so the fight goes on.

The second planning application that we are concerned with is the proposed Equine Hospital at Poulton Mill which straddles the River Ogg, the parish boundary between ourselves and Marlborough. This has proved to be a much bigger and far-reaching issue than was originally thought with submissions now received from National bodies for ecology, archeology, waterways and the environment.

For us, the major concern is the intention to construct a large entrance with splays off the C6 at the foot of Poulton Hill, suitable for horseboxes, vehicles with trailers and a flood of associated business traffic in an already congested and blind piece of road. Marlborough Town Council have not objected to this, so that we will have to stand alone in making our representations to the forthcoming Planning Meeting.

Finally, I want to thank you all for your sterling work during the year. I am given to understand that Minal Parish Council is much respected in the County at large because of our enterprise, solid achievements and strong sense of community spirit. This pleases me immensely and I want to thank you all for your unstinting effort and cooperation. Special mention must be made of Sue who has managed our affairs so expertly through the year. I know that she is much liked and respected in Local Government circles and has had a large part to play in our success as a Parish Council.

## **7. Village Hall Report – Rob Bailey**

It was with great sadness that I have to report that on 12 October 2021, Bob Barnett sadly died. Bob was our long serving handyman, cleaner, fire alarm checker, etc. He is sorely missed by us all as Bob was a great village supporter, active for many years throughout Minal.

On a more positive note, I am pleased to say that this report covers a full 12 month period unlike my previous one which was severely affected by the Covid-19 virus closing down village halls. While during this period of the report our finances have been secured by generous grants from the Government and distributed by Wiltshire Council under strict conditions. The annual accounts display the various grants we have received.

Nevertheless, life has, I am glad to report, returned towards normal with all Covid Restrictions being gradually lifted in a phased manner. Consequently, our income stream from letting the Village Hall has started to return and I am confident that by the middle of 2022 we will be

back to near normal. In the meantime, the Committee took advantage of the lack of bookings to carry out essential and desirable maintenance and upgrades to the hall's facilities.

Jon Napper, our outstanding Maintenance Member worked hard in securing a very competitive price for the foam filled roof insulation which has already shown dividends in reduced heating costs. We remained concerned that there was continued damp in the SE corner of the building. Further investigation revealed that the downpipe by the corner was feeding into a blocked drain and that the soakaway was not working correctly. Despite our best efforts neither Jon nor I were able to clear the blocked drain and so the professionals were called in. With very high pressure water jets they managed to clear a partial way through the blockage caused by root damage. Faced with the prospect of digging up and constructing a new soakaway at a cost of £1000 - £1500 the Minal Gardening Club came to our rescue. Through funds raised by selling plants Milly Carmichael and Deidre Watson managed to raise over £200 which paid for an agricultural water trough. Combined with a very keen team of village gardeners and instructed by members of ARK (Action for the River Kennet) and Rain Garden UK a very successful rain water planter was constructed. To date, it appears to have resolved the water ingress problem. Other maintenance work carried out included hedge cutting, leaf diverters installed in the remaining corner downpipes, repainting the soffits and porch woodwork.

4 years ago we had to have removed a dying oak tree in the east corner of the car park. However, that tree has been replaced by one donated by Sarah Foard and planted by her son Edison back in the autumn. It is now thriving.

Looking to the future, Jon has produced various maintenance programmes – for regular maintenance task, future repair and replacement tasks and a possible plan to meet the Government's Net Carbon Zero target. Only last month we had the final phase of double glazing installed throughout the hall, and partly financed by a grant from the Parish Council for which we are most grateful.

In closing, I would once again, like to thank all the members of the Village Hall Committee for their excellent volunteer work for the benefit of villagers and hirers, plus a huge thank you to Pauline Barnett who keeps the hall in immaculate condition despite now having to work on her own.

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

2021 was a successful and happy year in both sport and social activities. The MSSC committee, with good support from the Minal community, worked very hard to make things happen whilst still complying with ongoing and ever shifting pandemic rules. As a result we enabled and organized a full complement of sport and social events to the great benefit of the local community- both physically and mentally. We were also able to re-establish financial viability and stability as reported here by the Treasurer

On the subject of finance, I reported at the AGM in 2021 that we had engaged the voluntary services of Martin Gibson, a local farmer, to examine and sign off the MSSC accounts. This he did for both 2020 and 2019 calendar years and has undertaken to do it again for 2021. The MSSC sincerely thanks Martin for this kind service. Therefore the accounts presented today are still in draft form, subject to Martin's sign off.

During the year we were pleased to welcome Ashley Miles to the committee, and he quickly got busy organizing several Minal XI cricket fixtures both home and away, including a home derby against the Ramsbury Leg Rovers. The Ramsbury Leg Rovers (Thursday evenings) and Marlborough 3rds (Saturday afternoons) continued to play at Minal through the summer months, with the pitch being diligently prepared by Stu Barnett. Thanks Stu!

Marlborough Youth Football played football at Minal through the winter season (Jan- April and Sep-Dec) with a full complement of matches on Saturday and Sunday mornings as well as training in the evenings during the week. Minal is predominantly used by the U8, U9 and U10 girl's teams some of whom live in Minal and all of whom live very locally and it is heartening to witness their enjoyment on the field. A special thanks to John Whitehead, a Minal resident, who is the MYFC Secretary and a driving force to the excellent resurgence of youth football in the community.

Social events for the year organized by MSSC included the Duck Races on the river, Mikron Outdoor Theatre production of "A Dog's Tale", the Village Fete, Bonfire night and Bingo. All events were very popular with an atmosphere of happiness and community spirit after a tough few years. The fete in particular required the engagement of Minal volunteers and sister organizations (Village Hall and Church) and a huge amount of hard work. The result was truly gratifying and the expression of sheer joy and release as villagers, young and old, danced in the rain at the end of a day of fun, was worth every minute. Too many people to thank again but a special mention has to be made of Nick Beere who "made the music". Nick also provided dramatic background music on the Bonfire night which enhanced the spectacular Fireworks display.

The field was kept treated, mowed and lined through the year to the benefit of both the sports users and the villagers. The clubhouse is old and is deteriorating, requiring consistent patching and fixing. Replacement windows for the change rooms were sourced and fitted and repairs to the leaking roof is ongoing. 4 cubic metres of soil was placed in front of the clubhouse to raise the level of the field which had subsided and become very muddy. Plans are underway for a more major repair to the central section of the roof.

Thanks to Anne Youngs for continuing to carry out cleaning and removal of rubbish.

During the year a major water leak occurred when a drain valve was unintentionally left open. This incurred a large bill but this was mostly met by a successful claim through our Community Insurance.

We remain "out of lease" since 2014. After hearing nothing from the Lessors for more than a year, I was re-approached by their representative in November 2021. We met on the field where he expressed the Lessors wish to review and renew the lease. On this basis I provided further information as requested. Despite follow ups from me, we heard nothing further until today (26<sup>th</sup> April 2022) when I finally got through to the representative by phone. He assured me that the intention remained to review and renew the lease, but that little progress had been made so far. I expressed our desire to move forward on this. We continue to pay the rent and never receive a receipt.

Finally on a sad note I report the passing of Bob Barnett who was a former Trustee and loyal and hard-working member of the MSSC. Bob quietly went about cleaning, repairing and painting both at the clubhouse and in the village for many years. A true unsung hero. I am pleased that this committee has agreed to source and place a new bench in his memory on the field.

Looking forward to 2022, the calendar is full of sporting fixtures and social events again. I thank this committee for their commitment and hard work, both for 2021 and in anticipation of more this year!

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

Rebecca Spicer has taken over the Church Warden role. John Bevan gave a brief update of church activities. The Church toilet has been completed. The winter storms caused damage to the weather vane and repairs are being handled by the church diocese. Trees in the Churchyard were surveyed by local arboriculturalist Sarah Duckworth who made several recommendations. Permission for tree maintenance also has to go through the diocese. During the survey Sarah identified a rare fungus which Sarah has since researched it and discovered it to be *Ganoderma Carnosum*. The discovery means that the environment in the churchyard is diverse and undisturbed allowing it to flourish.

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

Brian Devonshire proposed John Bevan as Chair for the year and Lucy Kirkman seconded. John Bevan proposed Brian Devonshire as Vice Chair seconded by Adam Kebble. The Vice Chair role has been shared with Rob Bailey for the last 4 years and the Clerk agreed to talk to Rob Bailey. Councillors approved Rob Bailey's appointment subject to his agreement. Subsequent to the meeting Rob Bailey has agreed to be Vice Chair for the year.

#### **11. Confirmation of Insurance arrangements.**

The Clerk advised that the premium has increased this year in line with the general economic conditions. Councillors approved remaining with the current provider.

#### **12. Finance.**

The budget for 2022-23 was approved in March 2022. The Council financial statements will now show designated funds for the Cat G project and reserves for one years' expenses as advised by the external auditors. Councillors approved ongoing subscriptions to Ark, CPRE, WALC, and NALC and £100 to Wiltshire Search and Rescue. The updated Asset Register and Financial Regulations were approved in January and March 2022.

#### **13. 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.

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

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

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

Rob Bailey – 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 – Emergency Plan, Maintenance

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

Adam Kebble – Playground

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.

**15. Any Other Business**

None.

Meeting closed at 7.10pm. Next meeting Monday 8 May 2023