

MINAL PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting Held on 3 May 2023 At 6.30pm in the Village Hall

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| <p>1. Present:
John Bevan - Chairman
Brian Devonshire – Vice Chairman
Anna Whitehead
Adam Kebble
Lucy Kirkpatrick
Guy Gagen</p> | <p>Apologies Accepted from:
Rob Bailey, Rebecca Spicer</p> <p>In Attendance
Clive Scholefield, Lyn Scholefield
Lesley Rowe</p> |
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2. Questions from the Public: None.

3. Declarations of Interest: None

4. Minutes of the Annual meeting held on the 9 May 2022

The minutes were approved and signed accordingly.

5. Matters Arising: None

6. Chairman's Report for 2023 John Bevan

It has been an eventful year dominated by the two large and contentious planning applications which we have steadfastly opposed. The first, relating to a serious planning infringement at the Rabley Equestrian Centre, has finally been resolved with the offending windows partially reinstated with wooden louvres and the removal of outside lights on the South side of the barn. It is not the result that we wanted but a compromise which pleases nobody, and so we can see it only as a Pyrrhic victory.

The second planning application for an Equine Hospital at Poulton Mill remains to be determined as the evidence and associated reports are still being assembled by Wiltshire Council. So far as we are concerned, the main objection is to the proposed new entrance off the C6 at the foot of Poulton Hill. Wiltshire Council seems determined to accept the recommendation of its own in-house engineer despite Mr Ephson's independent surveyor stating that it cannot be done in such a confined space according to Highways' own rules. We also have the evidence of our own eyes and common sense to refute this absurd development.

Good things have happened too, particularly the successful conclusion of the Marlborough Area Neighbourhood Plan which was endorsed by public vote last month and which, as is expected, will become the basis for future planning policy in the area. We have to thank former chairman Sir Nigel Thompson and former councillor Deirdre Watson for their part in this. Mention must also be made about the reopening of The Horseshoe Inn after months of refurbishment, and the start of Martin Gibson's farm butchery in Stitchcombe which is helping to turn the tide of Minal's commercial decline since the Post Office closed 25 years ago. We wish both businesses every success in the coming years and must endeavour to support them.

We also had an excellent and well-attended village fete last July at which a memorial bench to the memory of the late Bob Barnett was installed in the sports field. The Playpark has gone from strength to strength with many improvements made during the year including replacement fencing along the southern border, new logs and surfacing. We have also caused the entrance to the church car-park to be reconstructed and stoned so as to enable cars to park more easily.

Our churchyard and green spaces continue to be well-maintained by David Pittams, and we are enjoying a much better working relationship with local farmers which has resulted in our needing to spend considerably less on maintaining footpaths than in previous years. Our policy of replacing stiles with kissing-gates has been much appreciated by everyone, especially the elderly. Our thanks to John Whitehead for managing the footpaths. Finally, my thanks to my vice-chairmen and fellow councillors for your enthusiastic contribution to the smooth-running of the Parish Council; also to our clerk and Responsible Financial Officer for steering us unerringly through the year's business and for keeping our website so meticulously.

7. Village Hall Report Rob Bailey

The past year has been financially challenging as it has for most charities, albeit we remain at a point of breaking even. There were a number of factors at play affecting our income and ultimately our balance sheet. First, the number of bookings has not recovered to pre-Lockdown numbers, and secondly, the price of gas and electricity have had a most severe effect on our budget.

To mitigate these effects we carried out a survey of other local village halls to ensure we remained competitive and gave value for money to local organisations, clubs and individual hirings. We have subsequently raised the hire costs by 10%. To reduce our power consumption our "handyman" Jon Napper set about resetting the heaters, cleaning the dust from their intake and ensuring that the temperatures of each radiator was set correctly. Moreover, Jon arranged for the boiler to be serviced and the radiator pipes to be internally cleaned. Our accountant Lynn Scholefield now controls the heating remotely to ensure the hall is only warm when required. Jon meanwhile fitted automatic on/off lights to the toilets where invariably the lights would not be turned off by those hiring the hall. We hope that these measures will help reduce our power consumption and thereby our costs.

Jon has been very generous both with his financial contributions to the hall and to the time he spends ensuring the quality of the building remains in its current good state. Gutters, paving slabs and toilet systems have all been cleaned thoroughly and drainage pipes blocked by tree roots have been removed and replaced.

Our future project is to infill the porch with descent insulation and an overhead hot air fan to improve the heat retention in the main hall and to provide an air lock between the main door and hall. Applications for grants have been submitted to various organisations but, unfortunately, we have now heard that planning permission is required although the project falls within the guidelines of permitted development. This is a temporary setback as we hope to have the project completed by the onset of autumn.

We continue to look for a replacement for Lisa Coomber our bookings clerk but to no avail so far. On the other-hand we had Sarah Foard volunteer to join the small number of committee members and she has been made the member for project information. We very much welcome Sarah joining us.

I continue to be very well supported by Lynn Scholefield as Treasurer, Susanna Lamb as Secretary, Lisa Coomber as Bookings Clerk, Milly Carmichael as member without portfolio and 'Janitor Jon' Napper all of whom give their time freely and without recompense. Furthermore, our cleaner, Pauline Barnett keeps the hall in immaculate condition. I greatly value their hard work, enthusiasm and commitment to ensure that the village enjoys an excellent asset for all to use.

8. Sports and Social Club Report

2022 was a return to normality for the Sports and Social Club. The field continues to be used all year round for cricket in the summer and Football in the Autumn, Winter and Spring. Five successful events were run; the duck race, Mikron theatre, the Summer Fete, Fireworks and Bingo and it is planned to repeat these this year. The field has also hosted private events and a school sports day. The accounts have been scrutinized by Martin Gibson and 2022 saw a profit of £2,600 after all costs and expenses. This is slightly less than 2021 (£3,500) due to some additional costs but after a couple of years of losses it is good to see the club back in profit. The summer fete raised a profit of £1342 which was split between the village hall, church and sports and social club.

Thanks were given to the field team, Stuart Barnett, Richard Cook and John Youngs who do an excellent job and to Terry Miles and Eva Cora for their help with the pavilion roof repairs.

The Sports and Social Committee were pleased that the Neighbourhood Plan lists the playing field as a sports and recreation amenity giving it better protection from any future developers.

The situation with the lease remains. We have been "out of lease" since 2014. The current rent is £600 per year. The lease was previously renewed at 7 year intervals but the A W Gale Will Trust administrators have proved elusive. Dom Coomber is now in email contact with a Trust Administrator and it is hoped to make progress on the lease over the next year. A new trustee is being sought to replace Chris Hurd who has now left the village.

9. Report from the Minal Parish Parochial Church Council

Sarah Musgrave had provided a copy of PCC Annual Report and John Bevan gave a brief update from the report. The weekly services have been a success as the regularity of a known service each week meant those who only used to attend sporadically, became 'regulars' and with this the pastoral care of each other increased.

The church hosted a visit from Bishop Data, his wife Agnes, and baby Esther of South Sudan, in August following the Lambeth conference. They met local farmers, were shown round the church by David Sherratt.

The Avenue Nursery added to the Remembrance Service on 13th November, by decorating the Lychgate with poppies. Later in November, there was a 'day of bishops', when Bishop Stephen, the new diocesan bishop, came to the Marlborough Deanery and led Evening Prayer in St John the Baptist church. Later the same day, Bishop Andrew shared his faith in our church, alongside Jon Cannon, under the title of 'Hallowed Ground'.

Thanks were given to regular helpers and the growing number of committed parishioners namely; Rebecca, as Churchwarden, John Bevan loyal and committed organist, David Sherratt stalwart of our Holy Communion services, setting up, and ringing bells, Sue Sykes,

Denise Price and their team of flower arrangers for ensuring the church is always blessed with flowers. There is also a band of 'openers and closers' who come out in all weathers to ensure the church is open for prayer, every day and Gilly Price has become a Verger for Weddings and funerals.

10. Election of Chairman and Vice Deputy Chair

John Bevan had announced his decision to step down as Chair and Parish Councillor in January. The Clerk said that Anna Whitehead had come forward to be Chair and Brian Devonshire formally proposed her for the position. The vote from Councillors was unanimous and Anna was duly elected Chair of the Parish Council. The Clerk then turned to the roles of Deputy Chair where there have always been two to cover for absences. Anna Whitehead and Guy Gagen proposed Brian Devonshire and Rob Bailey to continue in these roles and Councillors voted unanimously to approve.

The Clerk read out a note from Rob Bailey thanking John Bevan for his work for the parish Council and latterly as Chair. There was a round of applause and JB was presented with gifts and a card.

John Bevan presented Anna Whitehead with the Minal Chain of Office and then left the meeting.

11. Election/Co-option of Councillor

The vacancy for a Councillor had been advertised in Minal News. There were no applications but Lesley Rowe had been approached informally by John Bevan and had agreed to volunteer. She gave a short summary of her work experience and skills and was proposed by Brian Devonshire. Councillors voted unanimously to co-opt Lesley Rowe to the Council.

12. Code of Conduct and Register of Pecuniary Interests

The Clerk presented the PC's Code of Conduct to Lesley Rowe who completed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and Register of Pecuniary Interests. The Clerk asked Councillors if there were any changes to their Pecuniary Interests this year. AW stated that she was no longer a Governor at Ramsbury School and that her husband was involved with the Marlborough youth football club that uses the sports field. The Clerk will now add LR to the Register on the Wiltshire Council Website.

13. Confirmation of Insurance arrangements.

The Clerk had tried to get a quote from Zurich Insurance but this has not been forthcoming. There are only a few providers and the size of our playground puts the cost up for some providers. This year's premium from BHIB is slightly less than the previous year. Councillors approved remaining with the current provider.

14. Finance.

Councillors approved ongoing subscriptions to Ark, CPRE, WALC, and NALC and there is budget for further donations during the year. The Financial Regulations, Asset Register and Risk Assessment were approved for use during the coming financial year.

15. 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.

16. Election of Officers – Councillor Roles

Anna Whitehead Chair - Footpaths (together with John Whitehead) overarching role for planning, communication and liaison with WCC and website.

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

Rob Bailey – Minal News, Rob is also Village Hall Chair.

Guy Gagen – Emergency Plan, Maintenance

Lucy Kirkpatrick – Cat G Highways representative

Adam Kebble – Playground

Lesley Rowe – Finance Committee

It was agreed that Parish Steward liaison would move to the Clerk and all Councillors should report any maintenance issues to the Clerk as and when they are noticed (and not wait for meetings) so that they can be added to the monthly Parish Steward list. **Action: Clerk to send out parish steward task list to Councillors.**

Co-option

Chris Webb, former Councillor acts as Church Liaison and Burials. The Clerk has not been receiving financial records despite asking the funeral directors and stonemason. This year's audit has picked up this lack of documentary trail and the church burial record is only a list of names and plot numbers. **Action: Clerk to take over the financial management of Burial records and CW to be liaison with church yard issues only.**

17. Any Other Business

None.

Meeting closed at 7.30pm. Next meeting Monday 13 May 2024