

MINAL PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting Held on 13 May 2024 At 6.30pm in the Village Hall

- 1. Present:**
 Anna Whitehead - Chairman
 Brian Devonshire – Vice Chairman
 Lesley Rowe
 Adam Kebble
 Lucy Kirkpatrick
 Guy Gagen
 Rob Bailey
- Apologies Accepted from:**
 Caroline Thomas
- In Attendance**
 Clive Scholefield, Valerie Hammerton
- 2. Questions from the Public:** Valerie Hammerton asked about the trees on the C6 bank opposite her house that are getting rather large. Since moving in 3 years ago she has noticed the increased growth of the trees and is concerned about their stability in high winds. As the winds are on the bank in front of the Gales fence Councillors believe these are the responsibility of Highways and VH was advised to report using the My Wilts App.
- 3. Declarations of Interest:** Lesley Rowe works for Zurich insurance and although not involved in Sales at the organisation will abstain from voting on this issue.
- 4. Minutes of the Annual meeting held on the 3 May 2023**
 The minutes were approved and signed accordingly.
- 5. Matters Arising:** None
- 6. Chairman's Report for 2023 Anna Whitehead**
 I sat down to write this report thinking it has been a quiet year but looking over past agendas and actions I have realised that impression was incorrect. Many of the issues arising this year have required great determination and persistence from our clerk to be resolved, for which I am very grateful.
 The Parish Council's activities this past year have included:
- Launching the Emergency Plan and Emergency section of the village website, to which information on flooding has now been added given the flooding earlier this year. The PC has also sourced some gel sandbags for use by the village during a future flooding emergency.
 - Replacing and repositioning the defibrillator on the village hall.
 - Ongoing repairs to and maintenance of the village playground. Many thanks to Adam Kebble for all his time and effort spent on this, as well as work done by the Clerk and her husband and the Gagen family, and to all who were involved in the recent playground maintenance day.
 - Planting a crab apple tree in the playground which was kindly donated by one of our villagers.
 - Reinstating the wooden signpost at the Eastern end of the village thanks to a beautiful refurbishment job by parish councillor Adam Kebble.
 - The Chair and Clerk attending the WALC conference.
 - Replacing the batteries in the Speed Indicator Devices at both ends of the village.
 - Continuing to press for a new pedestrian footpath so that villagers at the Eastern end of the village can safely walk into the village.

- Considering measures to control speeding on the residential part of Thicketts Road and past the playground, including applying for new 20 mph signs.
- Pushing for potholes to be filled and gullies to be cleared by Wiltshire Council;
- The usual maintenance of the village – grass cutting, footpath clearance, emptying of dog waste bins and
- Responding to planning applications in consultation with affected parties.

Whilst not a Parish Council activity, I would also like to thank our parish councillor, Lesley Rowe, for organising a revival of the tradition of Beating the Bounds.

7. Village Hall Report Rob Bailey

This report covers just an 8 month period since my last during which considerable improvements and essential maintenance has been carried out to the Hall. Regrettably, our income stream remains low while service and energy costs continue to increase. Moreover, despite improving our advertising there remains reluctance for clubs, organisations and individuals to return to pre-COVID activity levels; this is not exclusive to Minal I hasten to add. As I reported previously, we do remain solvent and Sarah Foard continues in the role of ‘Publicity’ aiming to reach a wider audience of possible participants.

On a more positive note, the Hall is in good structural condition mainly thanks to Jon Napper’s continuing hard work ensuring all the fixtures, fittings, heating, and drainage remain in good order. To that end, Jon now produces a regularly update on “works required” and “works completed” which is proving to be a useful management tool. Milly suggested that we should hold a Village Hall Spring Clean to which we invited all villagers to participate and also to partake in making colourful bunting for future village events. A great deal was achieved with several repairs, painting and replacements carried out. Of note, is the addition of sound baffle boards secured to the walls and sloping areas of the ceiling. I was very grateful for the technical advice provided by Nick Beere who oversaw the project and helped Jon and myself secure the panels in the correct position; this has reduced considerably the echo effect of the hall and improved the acoustics markedly.

Finally, after many years of excellent service our Bookings Clerk – Lisa Coomber has retired. Thank you Lisa for the massive contribution you have made to the Committee and to the wider community. I am pleased to welcome Siobhan Kebble who has kindly agreed to take on the task vacated by Lisa. Once again, I would like to record that without the support of our small committee of dedicated volunteers and our exceptional cleaner Pauline, Minal Village would not have such a wonderful facility for all to enjoy. My sincere thanks to Lynn, Lisa, Susanna, Milly, Sarah, Pauline, Siobhan and Jon for their continued hard work and support.

8. Sports and Social Club Report

To start on a sad note. 2023 was overshadowed by the unexpected death of Suart Barnett at home on the evening of 5th July. We acknowledge with deep gratitude the service he gave to the MSSC and Minal as cricket captain, MSSC chairman and particularly in preparing and maintaining the field, pitch and clubhouse over many years.

2023 was a busy year. Use of the sports field was again underpinned by cricket in the summer and youth football over autumn, winter and spring. Social events included Mikron outdoor theatre, the fete, the bonfire night and the bingo. Hard work by MSSC committee with great support from the village for the fete in particular. No Duck Races or 6 a side cricket but a successful new event being the fun run organized by Dave Evans. Definitely one for the future! The field was also used by the Minal school for their annual sports day.

As a result of these efforts the club had another successful financial year. Draft accounts for the calendar year 2023 indicate a profit of £2,751.27 (2022 = £2,623). As always, the excess takings for the fete were split

equally three ways between the MSSC, the Village Hall and the Church. This amounted to £1,435.63 each (2022 = £1,342 each).

Martin Gibson has again acted as independent examiner of the accounts, signing the 2022 accounts and has received the 2023 accounts to review.

We successfully applied to the Marlborough Area Board for a grant in the amount of £500 towards replacement gazebos. The two pop up gazebos were duly delivered in early 2024 and we will be sharing the excess cost of just under £500 with the church and the VH, hopefully out of this coming year's fete profits.

With the loss of Stuart, Richard Cook and John Youngs had to increase their hours working on the field and clubhouse. Phil Miles is assisting with the pitch. Ongoing repairs on the clubhouse included refelting of the visitors' roof, repair to verandah soffit and replacement of visitors' toilet floor – I'm sure there's more!

We remain out of lease (since 2014). Dom Coomber has pursued discussions with the managing agent representing the Landlord Trustees. Some progress has been made and we await a more detailed Heads of Terms from the Agent for our review. Thanks to Jamie Pittams' solicitor and Anna Whitehead for advice. The Right to Bid for Assets of Community Value to be applied for if and when we get back into lease.

At the MSSC AGM held on 24th April, Steffan Sumner was voted in as a Trustee to replace Chris Hurd who having moved from Minal several years ago has stood down. All other office bearers and committee members remained unchanged.

A full set of activities ahead:

Minal Leg Rovers (formerly Ramsbury) most Thursday evenings.

Marlborough Cricket now using the field every Saturday pm (3rds and 4ths alternating)

MYFC – still very popular and active

Fete – Saturday 20th July

Mikron Outdoor theatre – Wednesday 31st July

Duck Races on the Kennet – Bank Holiday weekend 25th or 26th August – TBA

Bonfire night – Tuesday 5th November

Bingo – TBA – maybe twice this year.

9. Report from the Minal Parish Parochial Church Council

Valerie Hammerton has recently joined the PCC and the Clerk had received a full Annual Report from Sarah Musgrave. VH summarised a few points. There were 59 services in 2023-24 and attendance is normally 10-19. The nativity attracted over 100 people. There was an increase in regular giving but a slight decline in gift aided giving. There were two fewer events resulting in a decrease in that income but overall there was a slight excess of income over expenditure. In September, the church had the Archdeacons' Triennial Visitation. This is the occasion when archdeacons 'survey the churches, chancels, and churchyards within his/her jurisdiction at least once in three years and shall give direction for the amendment of all defects in the fabric, ornaments, and furniture of the same.' The Church was in good order, with particular thanks to Mark Mutch, David Sherratt and Rebecca Spicer who offer such good oversight of the church. There was some discussion about Church Field and the need for the PCC to approve water supply to enable the field to be used for grazing. This was dealt with more fully in the main PC meeting.

10. Report from Caroline Thomas, County Councillor

Some highlights from Wiltshire Council and my own work to support residents in Marlborough East are below.

Without a sound financial footing no council is able to deliver on its statutory requirements and manifesto commitments. Despite the ongoing budget pressures due to increasing demand for services and

inflationary costs, Wiltshire Council has effectively managed these challenges through a focus on prevention and early intervention.

So, I'm delighted to report that **our 2024-25 budget is again balanced** with every saving we need to find identified both this year and next, with no cuts to any services (libraries, leisure centres, household recycling centres etc) or use of valuable reserves.

The Council receives nearly 83% of its funding from Business Rates and Council Tax, so we take delivering on our promises to local people very seriously. It's always useful to remember that over 59% of your money is spend on adult and children's social care.

Children's Services – rated Outstanding by Ofsted: Giving Wiltshire's children the best start in life is fundamental to improving their chances of living full and healthy lives. Working relentlessly to improve our services we now deliver consistently Outstanding services that ensure the needs of families and children are met at the right time by the right people.

Additional Funding for Highways & Flood Prevention: Cycles of baking temperatures, flooding and freezing has caused significant damage to stretches of Wiltshire's roads, as it has nationally. Tackling the issues on our classified and unclassified network remains a priority so we are investing an additional £10m in Highways maintenance, which with an additional £5.2m of DfT funding, will enable significant extra road surfacing and treatment works over the next 2 years. Latest plans for the Marlborough Community Area can be seen [here](#). We are also investing an extra £1.5 million a year to treble the number of gullies we clear each year and to increase the number of pot hole gangs. Our winters are getting wetter so it's critical to invest in keeping drainage systems clear to mitigate the impact.

An extra £800,000 for Enforcement over coming years: We all have examples where planning enforcement is not seen as being strong enough so we are investing in more enforcement officers. In addition to enforcing planning rules and tackling illegal parking, enforcement is also about making sure people are kept safe from dangerous living conditions, that our countryside is not polluted with fly tipping, fly posting and litter, and that more anti-social behaviour is prevented. That where people break rules they are held to account to stop our residents' lives from being blighted.

Council Tax

In common with most councils we have put up council tax by 4.99%, which will cost a Band D house an extra £1.65 per week. However, this is in the face of the Council's own costs rising by 9% so if we don't increase council tax now we will just store up future problems.

Across the town and parishes, I have continued to support residents with specific local matters

In July 2022 I set up the **Marlborough Area Youth Forum**, to employ a Youth Worker and support the Youth Club at St Margaret's Mead and youth work in the wider Community Area. This year, with Wiltshire Community and National Lottery funding and the huge contribution of Lisa Farrell, one of our Trustees, we've been able to attract more volunteers enabling us to open after school on Wednesdays as well as Fridays, offering a range of activities and a hot meal. All St John's pupils are welcome and if you would like to get involved, please contact me.

I played a key role in ensuring Wiltshire Council met a commitment to transfer the **Community & Youth Centre** at no cost to Marlborough Town Council, after it invested thousands to renovate this important asset, later adding the skate park.

I also liaised between the councils to secure funding for a town centre traffic survey and modelling exercise to find ways to address the frequent **congestion** on the A346 and A4. Outcomes are expected this summer. I remain in regular contact with the traffic management team to ensure utility companies are held to account for their regular failings.

As chair of MTC's Finance & Policy committee, I have secured budget to recruit an **Apprentice Youth Worker** this year. This will be a fantastic opportunity to secure diploma and potentially degree level qualifications while working and gaining significant experience. Operating across a range of community groups, including the Forum, this post will help ensure we have an effective Youth Service to support our youngsters. I am also treasurer of the Marlborough Area Poverty Action Group.

Planning matters are often raised with me by local residents with developments at York Place, St Martins, and the Equine veterinary clinic on Poulton Hill dominating. I took both of these to the Eastern Area Planning Committee – a process that ensured local voices are heard and I will look to Planning (with its extra enforcement budget) to ensure all the conditions are met. I have also helped Savernake Farm progress ideas for a horticultural community hub and facilitated access to hundreds of trees and maintenance funding.

If there is a local issue that you are concerned about, please do get in touch.

Don't forget – the **Marlborough Area Board** exists to work alongside local organisations to make things happen in the community. It provides grants to community groups – from the Scouts, village hall committees, sports clubs, Greatwood to 'Sing-a-Long'. If you have a project or activity that needs funding, please get in contact so I can help.

Finally, as in past years, I would like to say a huge **thank you** to all the local councillors and support staff across Marlborough East who, along with an array of local voluntary organisations, help ensure we have such a lovely place to live.

11. Election of Chairman and Deputy Chair

The Clerk thanked Anna Whitehead for stepping into the role of Chair following the departure of John Bevan. Brian Devonshire proposed Anna Whitehead to serve a second year as term and this was seconded by Rob Bailey. Councillors thanked her for her service and AW accepted the position. Rob Bailey and Brian Devonshire agreed to both serve as Deputy Vice Chairs to cover for each other and were proposed by Lesley Rowe and seconded by Lucy Kirkpatrick.

12. Confirmation of Insurance arrangements.

The renewal from Aviva was £876 including a broker fee for the new agent Clear Council, who took over from BHIB, or £863 for a 3-year deal. The Clerk had an online quote from Zurich but could not proceed with this as it did not include zip wire insurance. The clerk investigated separate playground and/or zip wire insurance but this was more expensive. The Zurich broker has put together a quote which is £797 or £747 for a 3-year term. Premiums will be index linked and if there are any large increases due to claims Zurich offer the option to leave the 3-year Long Term Agreement. Councillors approved Zurich insurance. LR abstained

13. Finance.

Councillors approved ongoing subscriptions to ARK, CPRE, WALC/NALC and Wilts Search and Rescue (£100) 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.

14. 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.

15. Election of Officers – Councillor Roles

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

Brian Devonshire Vice Chairman – Area Board, Finance, Rob Bailey –Minal News, Rob is also Village Hall Chair. Guy Gagen – Emergency Plan, Adam Kebble - Playground

Lucy Kirkpatrick – LHFIG Highways representative, Lesley Rowe – Church Liaison and Finance advice. Chris Webb continues to act as Burials Liaison.

16. Any Other Business

None.

Meeting closed at 7.30pm. Next meeting Monday 12 May 2025