

MINCHINHAMPTON PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 27th June, 2022,
at 7.00pm at Minchinhampton Baptist Church office, Tetbury Street.

Vice-chair Cllr S. Hemmings chaired the meeting due to the absence on holiday of chair Cllr N. Hurst.

032/22: Present: Cllrs Hemmings (chair), Allen, Bathe, Coubrough, Ford, Howarth, Morriss, Reid, Waddington, Gloucestershire County and Stroud District Cllr C. Turner, the clerk, the deputy clerk.

033/22: Apologies: Cllrs N. Hurst, A. Mylechreest, A. Nicholls, P. Schwartz, L. Woakes, and Gloucestershire County Cllr S. Robinson.

034/22: Public questions/participation: There were none. Cllr Reid then used the item to raise a resident's query about whom was responsible for the Lemon Field wall. She was advised to inform the inquirer that either the private landowner or, as it adjoined a highway, Gloucestershire County Council would be the likely parties involved.

035/22: Declarations of interest/requests for dispensations: None.

036/22: Minutes: The minutes of the council's annual general meeting held on 30th May, 2022, had been circulated, were proposed by Cllr Morriss, seconded by Cllr Ford, and widely agreed.

037/22: Planning and Staffing Committees minutes: Both had been circulated, for information only, and were accepted. A confidential minute about the Staffing Committee's recommended appointment of a clerk to the NDPI (Neighbourhood Development Plan Implementation) Working Party has also been made available only to councillors.

038/22: AGAR (Annual Governance and Accountability Return) and Internal Audit submissions: The deputy clerk and Responsible Financial Officer presented the Annual Internal Audit Report 2021/22, the Annual Governance Statement 2021/22 sections one and two, the explanation of variances, and an end of year bank reconciliation which had all also been circulated. The RFO drew attention to three matters: Firstly that council was obliged to return a negative response to AGAR Section One, Statement Four, because it had failed to meet statutory deadlines for the exercise of public rights during the previous year (2020/21). An explanatory letter was sent as required; Secondly in AGAR Section Two, Box Nine, the council's total asset value was restated for the year 2020/21 at the instruction of the new internal auditor; Thirdly it was proposed by Cllr Morris, seconded by Cllr Reid and agreed that council would reject an observation by the internal auditor that there should be a cashier's certificate confirming the petty cash balance at year end. Members instead agreed to monthly petty cash reconciliations by the RFO, and to quarterly physical counts of the monies held by an appropriate councillor.

At this point the clerk wished to record congratulations to the deputy clerk and RFO who, as a new member of staff, had successfully tackled the requirements of the AGAR.

039/22: County and district councillors' reports: Cllr Turner drew attention to new SDC sheltered housing, the arrival of a dozen Ukrainian families in Minchinhampton, Box and Amberley, and the imminent appointment of a developer for the redevelopment of Brimscombe Port. She further highlighted the deadline for applications to the GCC digital inclusion fund, funding for a new special school and adult learning programmes, a consultation on cycling in the county, and the inconvenience of highways closures for roadworks. Her reports are available on request from the clerk. Cllr Morriss then drew attention to a footpath closure error and questioned the availability of old documents relating to Brimscombe Church.

At this point Cllr Turner left the meeting.

040/22: Leases: a) Vestry Room and b) Trap House basement - Drafts of both leases had been drawn up by the council's solicitor and circulated. Written advice from Cllr Mylechreest, who was unable to be present, led council to agree the arrangement for short term use of the Vestry Room as storage by the residents of Vestry Cottage was satisfactory. His comments about the basement would be passed to the lawyer for further advice; **c) Amberley Playground** - The clerk reported the draft lease offered to the council had, after some small amendments, been passed back to the Diocese as landlords and therefore awaited progress; **Box Lane play area** – Cllr Ford reported Horsfall House were happy to renew the expired lease for a further 10 years but not to extend the size of the playground.

041/22: Annual playgrounds' inspections and play areas investment: Cllr Hemmings prompted a lengthy discussion about both equipment and grounds' maintenance at play areas becoming proactive rather than reactive, and about works/replacements not remaining purely safety orientated. This followed the receipt of annual reports on the safety of the council's playgrounds at The Bulwarks, Box Lane and Albert Road, plus a safety report on the Amberley play area in readiness for the council's plan to take it over from the Gloucester Diocese. Cllr Hemmings' view was that the play areas were ageing and that substantial investment would shortly be needed. He was supported by Cllr Reid who believed the play parks were falling apart and had only one or two years left. There was a suggestion that a groundsperson might be employed to tackle works like fencing, signs and gates, as they occurred rather than in a reactionary manner after problems were reported. It was agreed to ask the council's current landscape contractors, who cut the grass on play areas, if they would have the resources for further tasks. The matter would further be passed to the Finance Committee to consider allocation of further resources for pro-active improvement of play spaces.

041/22: Reports: a) Minchinhampton CAN – Cllr Reid highlighted recent events including the Climate Action Network group's annual meeting. A fund-raising clothes swap evening and sustainability walk were planned in future months, and solar panels and electric car charging points investigated; **b) Minchinhampton Market House** - Cllr Waddington said problems had led to re-tendering for restoration of the undercroft. A full report would be made in August; **c) Highways meeting** - Cllr Schwartz' report of liaison with county officers about road signs, speed limits and similar was received and is available on request from the clerk. Cllr Morriss reported a Speedwatch record of 105 mph from The Bear to Tom Long's Post. An application for the Community Speedwatch group was underway. This was needed to apply for the parish's own Automatic Number Plate Recognition camera, for which members requested the clerk inquire with Cllr Turner about the possibility of digital inclusion funding; **d) Allotments** - Cllr Coubrough reported that attempted petty thefts from the allotments had led to installation of a combination padlock on the Friday Street gate. The (re)allocation and renewal of allotments and recording of same, including financial matters, was now completed using Edge software, and continue to be the responsibility of the deputy clerk. Previous discussion of the possibility of dividing allotments had led to them being measured and found to be of widely varying sizes, as shown in an attached spreadsheet. Plots varied in size from 71 sq. metres to 171, each paying the standard annual rental of £30. Members were therefore asked for policy decisions about a) introducing half plots and b) above what size they might be divided as they become available or offered, and c) whether the standard £30 should remain for all holders. Following debate the principle of offering half plots was agreed with details to be decided at the July council. That would follow a rewrite of the allotment rules and regulations which raised the issue of several current plot holders who lived outside the parish. Work to install a fourth water trough and a replacement gate at the Friday Street pedestrian access is ongoing. There was currently a waiting list of 39.

042/22: Clerk's report: Cllr Ashley Smith had resigned as a parish councillor. Petitioners had until 27th June to call for an election, after which a new Amberley Ward member could be co-opted.

A member of the public e-mailed to say she found the lack of any jubilee decorations “very disappointing”. Nailsworth Town Council was planning a medal presentation and lunch/afternoon tea on 26th July to celebrate the 30th anniversary of shared town crier Tony Evans’ 30 years in the voluntary role. They had asked if representative(s) of the parish council and of Minchinhampton community organisations might wish to attend, The council agreed to contribute £50 towards the catering costs. A nearby resident had drawn attention to how wild/overgrown the council’s Forwood Green had become. After discussion of possible solutions it was decided to meet the £50 expenses of the owners of two ponies that would graze it as soon as the weather was suitable. A grant application by Box Village Society has been referred to the next Finance Committee meeting.

Payments:

2Commune Ltd	Annual website expenses	£606.00
Stroud Living Landscapes	Play areas and allots mowing	£690.00
Edge IT Systems Ltd	Allotments software set up	£580.80
Edge IT Systems Ltd	Allotments data import	£91.20
SLCC	Deputy clerk qualification fee	£144.00
MDL Kelex Ltd	Printing TLP	£73.00
Claire Whitehead	Printer toner	£44.14
Solftlink Computer Systems Ltd	Outlook repair	£97.20
S. Hemmings	Zoom	£14.39
The Play Inspection Company Ltd	Play area annual inspections	£333.60
PATA	Payroll services	£62.95
Staffing	Staffing	£2,858.08
L. Taylor and Sons Ltd.	Petty cash	£50.00
A. Bullock	Cleaner	£42.00

043/22: Councillors’ items for future discussion: Tom Long’s Post distribution, allotments.

The meeting closed at 8.50pm.

Signed: Date: