

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

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Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 2nd May 2012 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 7.30pm.

Present - Councillors: Chris Wildridge – Chairman, Jayne Cox, Iona FitzGerald, Liz Hollis, Bryan Mead, Ian Sage and Yvonne Sommer.

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage, and four members of the public.

3323 – Election of Chairman and Chairman’s Acceptance of Office: The Chairman left the room and the Vice Chairman, Liz Hollis, chaired this item. Liz Hollis proposed Chris Wildridge as the Chairman for the coming year. This was seconded by Yvonne Sommer, and there being no other nominations Chris was duly elected. The Chairman returned and signed his Acceptance of Office.

3324 – Election of Vice Chairman: Liz Hollis was proposed by Yvonne Sommer, seconded by Bryan Mead and elected as Vice Chairman.

3325 – Apologies for Absence: Gloria Cawood – County Councillor and David Stevens - District Councillor.

3326 – Declarations of Interest: Liz Hollis declared a personal interest in item 3343 – payment of the rent on the allotments field as the owner of the field.

3327 – Public Participation: None.

3328 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 4th April 2012 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3329 – Matters Arising: Electoral Review of Somerset - The Local Government Boundary Commission had acknowledged the Parish Council’s submission regarding the parish’s move to the Mendip South Division.

3330 – Footpaths and Highways: Yvonne Sommer reported that the recent rain had washed more topsoil and stones down the bridleway at Honeycliffe which had blocked the drain in the road below causing flooding. The Clerk to write to Somerset Highways and the Rights of Way Officer about this. Yvonne also reported that Bailey’s Lane had been resurfaced. The A359 was closed at Wanstrow to allow repairs to the railway, but although the road past Batcombe Lodge to Wanstrow was to have been closed at the same time for water mains renewal works by Brickhouse Farm this had not happened. It was also reported that the Three Horseshoes sign on the A359 junction was blocking the sight of oncoming traffic – the Chairman volunteered to speak to the Landlord.

3331 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report and Preparation for RoSPA Inspection: The annual inspection of the Playing Field would take place in June and more playbark would be laid under the fort before then.

The revised quote for restoration of the Playing Field gate was £615 plus VAT and had been accepted by the Clerk after consulting the Chairman as authorised at the previous meeting.

Anthony Greenhalgh of Mainstay Projects asked if the Council wanted a recess in one of the bars of the gate where a plaque could be fitted. After discussion it was agreed no recess should be made. It was noted that the bottom bar of the large gate was broken – Alistair Cox would be asked if he could repair this.

3332 – Planning Applications: Planning Application No: 2012/0706 - Application for a lawful development certificate for an existing use of attic space as two flats. Church Farm, Batcombe – Lawful Development Certificate - Existing Use/Development. The Parish Council decided to recommend approval on the grounds that the attic space had been used as flats for more than ten years.

Planning Application No: 2012/0837 - Construction of earth bank slurry lagoon and extension of concrete yard. The Highlands, Sleight Farm, Batcombe – Full Planning Permission. The Parish Council decided to recommend approval on the grounds that the slurry lagoon would have no visual impact given the remote location of the farm and its distance from the highway and that its construction was required by the Environment Agency.

Planning Application Updates: There were no updates to report.

3333 – Conservation Area Appraisal: It was agreed that the Parish Council would recommend that the boundaries of the Batcombe Conservation Area should remain unchanged. The possible creation of a separate Conservation Area in Westcombe had been proposed but the Chairman felt that the Council could not adopt a position on this without consulting the residents of Westcombe. The Clerk was asked to write to the Conservation Officer confirming the suggestions and amendments to the draft appraisal that the Parish Council had made at its February meeting.

3334 – Parish Council Website: The Clerk raised the question of how much personal information Councillors wished to place on the website. To be addressed at the next meeting.

3335 – The Diamond Jubilee: Problems over the design of the Jubilee commemorative tokens for the children in the parish had been resolved using a revised design by Brendan Cox. The Parish Council agreed to contribute £30 towards the cost and the payment for the tokens was authorised. Various organisations in the village had given or promised £30 towards the cost of the tokens. The Jubilee group had met and arrangements for celebrating the Jubilee were progressing. The question of where and when the Jubilee cider would be sold was discussed.

3336 – Batcombe War Memorial Wall: The Diocese's contractor had repaired the wall behind the war memorial, but had apparently reported that the wall along the road in front of the war memorial also needed repairing. Preb Mark Ellis had informed the Clerk that the Diocese would be willing to repair this section of wall as well, but there had been no confirmation of this from the Diocese. The Chairman was concerned that the Parish Council should not allow the Diocese to repair a wall which was the responsibility of the Council. The Clerk was asked to speak to the Property Office, pointing out that the wall in front of the wall memorial was the responsibility of the Parish Council.

3337 – Appointment of Staffing Committee: Liz Hollis, Iona FitzGerald and Yvonne Sommer were appointed to the Staffing Committee, which would only meet to consider any complaints against or grievances by the Clerk.

3338 – Appointment of Village Hall Representative: Yvonne Sommer was willing to continue to be the Representative and was appointed.

3339 – Arrangements for Review of Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Other Matters: It was agreed to follow the timetable produced by the Clerk the previous year, with the Financial Regulations to be reviewed at the June meeting; the Council's and Clerk's membership of other bodies to be reviewed in December before the membership is renewed; and the Schedule of Assets, Risk Management Policy and insurance cover to be reviewed at the March meeting in time for the preparation of the Annual Report and renewal of the insurance. The other items including Standing Orders to be reviewed during the year before the next election of Councillors. It was noted that Standing Orders would probably need to be amended later in the year when the new Code of Conduct came into force.

3340 – Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31st March 2012: A copy of the financial statements had been distributed with the Agendas and the Clerk went briefly through the items on the statements. Most items were roughly as budgeted. The grant for footpath maintenance had not been budgeted. The rent from the allotments was £17.50 short as the Council had not received the rent for the half allotment that had been vacant. The sale of the allotments water trailer and the money raised for the Playing Field improvements had not been included in the budget.

The cost of cutting the Playing Field grass was more than budgeted because extra cuts were required and equipment maintenance was higher than budgeted because replacement swing chains had been bought in addition to Playbark for the fort. The Council had been required to deduct tax from the Clerk's salary by PAYE, although the Clerk's gross salary was unchanged. The cost of training was higher than budgeted as a result of new Councillors attending training courses after the election. The insurance premium was considerably reduced as a result of switching to Came & Co for insurance cover, and the cost of the election had been much less than expected because the election was not contested. The cost of paint for the Westcombe telephone kiosk was an unbudgeted expense.

The net result of the variations against the budget was a surplus of £1,726 on the year instead of the expected deficit of £293. This was largely due to the money raised for the Playing Field improvements and the fact that the election was not contested. At the end of the year the Parish Council had £4,281 in its funds, £2,500 more than anticipated in the budget. Of this £550 was set aside for the allotments and £950 was the money raised for the Playing Field improvements.

3341 – Precept and Update on Budget for Year Ending 31st March 2013: The Clerk reported that the precept of £7,100 had been paid into the Council's bank account and the VAT repayment of £95.49 had been claimed and received. An update on the budget for the current year had been distributed with the Agendas. Receipts and most payments were likely to be as budgeted. The exceptions were the spending of the money raised for the Playing Field improvements and money spent on the Playing Field gate and the commemorative tokens for the children in celebration of the Diamond Jubilee. The cost of cutting the grass in the Playing Field was likely to be higher than budgeted because of the increase in the price per cut.

3342 – Annual Return for the Year Ended 31st March 2012: Copies of Section 1 of the Annual Return - the Statement of Accounts – had been enclosed with the Agendas, together with a copy of the Financial Statements showing how the figures in the Statement of Accounts had been derived. Approval of the Statement of Accounts was agreed.

Copies of Section 2 of the Annual Return - the Annual Governance Statement – had also been enclosed with the Agendas, and approval of the Annual Governance Statement was also agreed. Copies of the Internal Auditor’s Report completed by Hazel Davidge were tabled at the meeting. It was agreed that a letter of thanks should be sent to Hazel for acting as Internal Auditor together with a bottle of wine and a box of chocolates.

3343 - Authorisation of payment: Councillors authorised the following payments:

- £200.00 T & E A Hollis – Lease of allotments field.
- £96.00 Mr G Sparkes – Grass cutting for March and April.
- £267.52 Broker Network Ltd – Insurance premium.

3344 - Other Business - Matters of Information: Liz Hollis reported that it was proposed to close Shepton Mallet Hospital. Liz was asked to draft a letter opposing the closure of the hospital. Liz also noted that it was likely that fracking would take place in Somerset. This was a concern because of the threat to local water supplies. The Clerk reported that Batcombe was invited to send a representative to the next meeting of the Torr Works Quarry Liaison Group on October 16th.

Iona FitzGerald asked for permission to hold a barbecue in the Playing Field after the Sponsored Walk for the Playing Field improvements on May 13th and this was agreed. Bryan Mead gave his apologies for the next meeting.

3345 - Dates of Future Meetings: The following dates were agreed for the monthly meetings of the Parish Council during the coming year, all but the January meeting being the first Wednesday of the month:

6 th June	4 th July	1 st August	5 th September	3 rd October	7 th November
5 th December	9 th January	6 th February	6 th March	3 rd April	1 st May

The date in April would also be the date of the Annual Parish Meeting and the August meeting would only be held if there were planning applications to consider. The Council to meet at 8.00pm in the summer and 7.30pm the rest of the year.

Chris Wildridge

6 June 2012