

# BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

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**Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> June 2012 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 8.00pm.**

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

**Also Present:** The Clerk – Rob Sage, Gloria Cawood – County Councillor and one member of the public.

**3346 – Apologies for Absence:** Bryan Mead and David Stevens - District Councillor.

**3347 – Declarations of Interest:** None.

**3348 – Public Participation:** Bruno Cristofoli reported that a wedding reception at Pennysquare Barn on June 9<sup>th</sup> had been cancelled and a wedding reception on June 16<sup>th</sup> was likely to be cancelled as the bridegroom was seriously ill. There would be a wedding reception on June 23<sup>rd</sup> and a 50<sup>th</sup> birthday party on June 30<sup>th</sup>, but no there would be no fireworks or Chinese lanterns.

**3349 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2012** were approved and signed by the Chairman.

**3350 – Matters Arising:** Shepton Mallet Hospital – Liz Hollis was thanked for drafting a letter expressing the Parish Council's concerns at the proposed closure of the seventeen inpatient and stroke rehabilitation beds at the Community Hospital. The letter had been sent to the Chairman of the NHS Foundation Trust and the Chairman of the Clinical Commissioning Group with copies to the District and County Councillors, our MP David Heath and the MP for Shepton Mallet, and the President of the League of Friends for the Hospital. The Parish Council had received responses from the Chairman of the Clinical Commissioning Group, from David Heath with a copy of response he had received from the Chairman of the NHS Foundation Trust, and from the County Councillor. Gloria Cawood congratulated the Parish Council for writing about the Hospital. She had written herself and would be urging the other parishes in her division to do so.

Conservation Area Appraisal – The Clerk reported that the public consultation would begin on June 20<sup>th</sup> with three copies of the final draft of the appraisal being available in the parish, one in the Village Hall, one in the Church and one in the pub.

**3351 – Footpaths and Highways:** A site meeting in May with Charlie Higgins from Somerset Highways and Clare Haskins the Area Warden for the County Council's Rights of Way Department to look at the bridleway at Honeycliffe was attended by the Chairman and Yvonne Sommer. This was felt to be a positive meeting at which it was suggested that substantial soakaways be excavated at the top and bottom of the bridleway to divert water from the bridleway and the road at Honeycliffe. It was hoped this would go ahead.

The Rights of Way Department had also agreed to provide a grant of £150 for footpath maintenance once again. The Clerk reported that Geoff Sparkes was willing to undertake

£150's worth of work on the footpaths as in previous years, which would work out at two hours work a fortnight over the summer. The Parish Council agreed to this proposal.

**3352 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report:** The new gate had been installed at the Playing Field and was felt to be very impressive. The Clerk to write a letter of thanks to Anthony Greenhalgh at Mainstay Projects. It was agreed that the gate should be insured for £1,800 as suggested by Anthony Greenhalgh.

Iona FitzGerald reported that the children's sponsored walk to raise money for the Playing Field improvements had been very successful. The sun had shone, 46 children took part and £720 had been raised with more to come. The next fundraising event would take place at the Sunrise Festival. It was suggested that the first piece of new equipment for the Playing Field might be purchased in the autumn.

**3353 – Planning Applications:** Planning Application: 2012/0923 – Two proposed dormer windows, roof light, removal of dis-used chimney stack and some internal roof space alterations (amendment to application 2011/2981) Holly Hill House, Holly Hill, Batcombe – Householder Planning Permission. There were no objections to the proposed dormer windows, roof light and removal of a chimney which were on the roof farthest from the road, and so the Parish Council recommended approval.

**Planning Application Updates:** Planning permission and Listed Building Consent had been granted for the change of use of the mill at Mill Farm to provide additional accommodation including bed and breakfast and holiday letting; and planning permission for the construction of a slurry lagoon and the extension of a concrete yard at The Highlands (Sleight Farm) had also been granted.

**3354 – Batcombe War Memorial Wall:** The Clerk had spoken to the Diocesan Property Officer who was clear that the wall between the war memorial and the parsonage field was the responsibility of the Diocese. It was also agreed that the wall along the road in front of the War Memorial was the Parish Council's responsibility. The Clerk to ask Kicko Cox for his opinion on whether this wall needed repairing.

**3356 – Parish Council Website:** The Clerk reported that it had proved impossible to pay for the website by Direct Debit from the Parish Council's bank account, so he had arranged to pay for it from his personal account and would reclaim the amount with his expenses each quarter. The quarterly fee was currently £35.96, which equates to £9.99 a month plus VAT. There was some discussion on how the website might develop and a decision on how much personal information about Councillors was deferred.

**3357 – Review of Financial Regulations:** Standing Orders required that the Council's Financial Regulations be reviewed annually. The Clerk reported that there had been no developments since the last review a year ago to suggest any changes were needed and so it was agreed that the Financial Regulations should remain unchanged.

**3358 – Consultation on Appointment of External Auditor:** The Audit Commission was proposing to appoint Grant Thornton as the external auditor for small parish councils in Somerset in place of Moore Stephens the current external auditor. There would also be a new scale of fees for the external audit, lower than the current scale, and if the Council's income and expenditure were both less than £10,000 no fee would be payable.

**3359 – Annual Grants from the Parish Council:** It was agreed to provide the budgeted grants of £300 to the Village Hall (£100 for our own meetings, £150 for committee meetings

of other village organisations and £50 to help with maintenance costs) and £200 to the Parochial Church Council for the maintenance of the churchyard. It was also agreed to give a grant of £100 to Mendip Community Transport under the section 137 power. An increase in the amounts awarded as grants would be considered at the budget meeting in November.

**3360 - Authorisation of payment:** Councillors authorised the following payments in addition to the grants in the previous item:

- £22.88 Southern Electric – Electricity supply for the Playing Field – January to April. This was a retrospective authorisation as the bill had to be paid before the meeting
- £153.00 Mr G Sparkes – Grass cutting for May. Extra cuts had been made in May because rain had prevented the normal number of cuts in April.
- £738.00 Mainstay Projects – The new gate for the Playing Field.
- £10.00 Somerset Playing Fields Association – Subscription.

**3361 - Other Business - Matters of Information:** Yvonne Sommer reported that the light in the Westcombe telephone kiosk was now working and the kiosk would be repainted when it stopped raining.

The Parish Council had been asked if a meeting at the Sunrise Festival was wanted, but this was not felt to be necessary. The Keep on the Grass group had been given twelve weekend camping tickets so they could fundraise at the Festival.

Iona FitzGerald asked who the stone trough at the top of Mill Lane belonged to and whether it could be planted with flowers.

The Jubilee celebrations were felt to have gone well. Liz Hollis gave her apologies for the next meeting.

**3362 – Date and Time of Next Meeting:** Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2012 at 8.00pm in the Old School, Batcombe.

*Chris Wildridge*

*4/7/12*