

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 5th September 2012 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 8.00pm.

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

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage, David Stevens – District Councillor, and fifteen members of the public.

3377 – Apologies for Absence: Ian Sage, who was working, and Gloria Cawood – County Councillor.

3378 – Adoption of a Code of Conduct for Batcombe Parish Council: New legislation required the Parish Council to adopt its own Code of Conduct. The Clerk had distributed a draft Code, based on a model produced by the National Association of Local Councils, with the Agendas and briefly spoke to it. Adoption of the Code was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Liz Hollis and agreed. Also distributed with the Agendas were Register of Interests forms that Councillors were required to complete with 28 days of adopting the Code of Conduct. These would be scanned and placed on the District Council's and the Parish Council's websites. Concerns were expressed at placing copies of Councillors' signatures on the internet and the Clerk was instructed not to pass on the forms until he had received an assurance that the signatures would be blanked out in a manner that could not be reversed.

3379 – Variation to Standings Orders – Code of Conduct: Various amendments to Standing Orders, recommended by the Somerset Association of Local Councils, had been distributed with the Agendas. These would require Councillors with an interest in a matter to leave the room while that matter was considered, and would allow for automatic delegation to the Clerk of dispensations to consider a matter when there were not enough Councillors without an interest in it. The variations to Standing Orders were proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Liz Hollis and agreed.

3380 – Filling of Parish Council Vacancy by Co-option and Acceptance of Office: The Clerk reported that no one had claimed a bye-election following the resignation of Bryan Mead from the Council, and that no expressions of interest in serving on the Council had been made following the advertising of the process of co-option. The Chairman asked if any of the members of the public present were interested in serving on the Council and Justin Witcombe of Honeycliff Farm offered to do so. No one else expressed an interest. Justin was nominated by Yvonne Sommer and co-opted onto the Council by the unanimous vote of the Councillors present. Justin joined the Council for the remainder of the meeting.

3381 – Declarations of Interest: None.

3382 – Public Participation: Alan Waddams and Barry Happe expressed concerns about the "eco-house" being built behind Chapel Row and whether it had permission to extend above ground level. The Clerk noted that the planning permission granted would appear as a single storey building when seen from the road and that the Parish Council had objected to the application, which had been refused by the District Council but allowed on appeal.

3383 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 4th July 2012 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3384 – Matters Arising: None.

3385 – Planning Applications:

Planning Application: 2012/1846 – Alterations and extensions to dwelling. Rockwells House, Batcombe – Householder Planning Permission. Mr Alan Waddams of Provis objected to the application on the grounds that the proposed dormer windows would look into his property and would also detract from the architectural integrity of the listed building and because of impact of the kitchen extension on the Georgian façade on the south of the main house. After comments from other members of the public present, the Parish Council decided to recommend refusal of permission on the grounds of the impact of the dormer windows on the privacy of Provis and on an important listed building in the Conservation Area and because the glass panels in the extension would not be appropriate next to the Georgian façade.

Planning Application: 2012/1891 – Erection of a two storey rear extension, removal of tree and the insertion of an additional window with the front elevation. Knoll View, Kale Street, Batcombe – Full Planning Permission. The applicant, Mr James Stubbs, spoke in favour of his application, noting that it was proposed to replace the 1970s extension at the rear of Knoll View. Louise Nicholson of the neighbouring property Chandlers objected to the proposed extension because of the impact it would have on her property. After a break to allow Councillors to study the plans again and comments from other members of the public present, the Parish Council decided to recommend approval as Councillors could not see that the extension would have a serious impact on Chandlers.

Planning Application: 2012/1751 – Installation of one 64m (to tip blade) wind turbine plus switch gear. Landmark Farm, Wanstrow – Full Planning Permission. The turbine would actually be in Witham Friary although the farm address was Wanstrow. The Parish Council decided to recommend that the decision was left to the Planning Officer after consultation as the turbine was outside of the parish and unlikely to have an impact on Batcombe.

Planning Application Updates: A second application for Listed Building Consent for the conversion of the coach house at Westcombe Stables to a self contained annexe had been made in July. As the new application was very similar to the original application which the Parish Council had recommended be approved, an extra meeting to consider the application had not been considered necessary by Councillors and the Clerk had responded on behalf of the Parish Council with the same response as made to the first application.

The application for two dormer windows, roof light, removal of dis-used chimney stack and internal roof space alterations at Holly House, Holly Hill had been approved.

The appeal against the refusal of permission for the two storey extension at Holly Cottage had been allowed. The planning inspector had not felt that the proposed extension would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of Holly Cottage or the street scene or an unacceptable effect on the living conditions of the residents of Cherry Cottage.

The planning permission for the deepening of the quarry at Torr Works was conditional on a Section 106 agreement. This agreement had now been signed and the Parish Council had received a copy of the decision notice. Liz Hollis noted that she had requested that the monitoring of water supplies in Batcombe be included in the agreement but this had not been done.

3386 – Footpaths and Highways: There was nothing to report other than that the road past Batcombe Lodge to Wanstrow had been closed by Brickhouse Farm in August for water mains renewal works to be carried out.

There were a number of complaints from the members of the public. These included a ridge in the road on the junction with the A359, water running in the road at Stonecot and on Westcombe Road, and the fact that hedges had not yet been cut. Complaints were also made about stones in the road by Church Farm, rubbish in the road at Sweetmeadow, and stones by Pugh's Bottom. It was also noted that the footpath at the bottom of Mill Lane was very boggy.

3387 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report: The annual inspection report of the Playing Field by RoSPA had been received. All items were scored at a very low risk or low risk level apart from the suspended log, goal posts, fort and junior swings which were classed as medium risk. No items required immediate attention but some chain wear should be monitored, the timber decay on the fort should be repaired and the projection of the side bar on the junior swings should be removed.

Iona FitzGerald had contacted Gloria Cawood, our County Councillor, about applying for a one-off grant of at least £500 for Playing Field equipment under the Health and Well-Being Budget Scheme. The Working Party were planning to produce a proposal for purchasing a piece of equipment for the Playing Field with the money already raised.

Liz Hollis chaired the meeting while the Council considered a request from Jane Batchelor of Longleat Cottage to make use of the old gate from the Playing Field (that was replaced by the new one commemorating the Jubilee) as a feature in her garden. This was agreed.

The Playing Field had taken a bit of a beating because of the wet weather during the Fete. It was hoped the Field would recover with time, but the area near the gate might need reseeding. The Clerk reported that Mr Sparkes had complained that there were people in the way while he was trying to give the Playing Field an extra cut before the Fete.

3388 - Authorisation of payment: Councillors authorised the following payments:

£82.80	Playsafety Ltd – RoSPA Inspection of the Playing Field.
£60.00	SALC – Code of Conduct Training.
£25.26	BWBSL – Water supply for Playing Field (Bristol Water).
£96.00	Mr G Sparkes – Grass cutting for July.
£19.70	Southern Electric – Electricity supply for Playing Field. (May-July).
£168.00	Mr G Sparkes – Grass and hedge cutting and strimming in August.

Authorisations for all but the last payment were retrospective as the bills needed to be paid in August.

3389 - Other Business - Matters of Information: The public consultation on the Conservation Area Appraisal had been completed and the Parish Council had not added anything to the response already provided.

The MP for Wells (and Shepton Mallet) Tessa Munt had responded to the Council's letter about the closure of beds at the Community Hospital stating her support for the hospital keeping all its beds. Our MP David Heath had visited Batcombe during his annual village tour on Thursday August 30th.

The Local Government Boundary Commission had submitted their final recommendations for Somerset County Council, with no changes to the proposals for the Mendip area which meant that Batcombe would be moving from the Mendip Central and East Division to the Mendip South Division.

The Audit Commission had confirmed that Grant Thornton UK LLP had been appointed as the external auditor for Batcombe Parish Council for five years from 2012/13.

Liz Hollis reported that she had received a lot of verbal support for the Sunrise Festival and three written complaints about it. There had apparently been more problems with noise in Bruton this year. At the post-festival meeting she would suggest that more be done to ensure compliance with conditions and that the noise monitoring should be independent. The Chairman reported that Dick Skidmore had complained about the running of FarmFest and the conditions at that festival.

Bruno Cristofoli had provided a list of the events in Pennysquare. There would be wedding receptions on September 8th, 14th and 29th and a fundraising event for the Air Ambulance on October 6th. This would be the last event of the year.

The Chairman reported that the Parish Council's website was now listed on Google.

3390 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 3rd October 2012 at 8.00pm in the Old School, Batcombe.

Chris Wildridge

3 October 2012