

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 6th February 2013 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 7.30pm.

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

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage.

3447 – Apologies for Absence: David Stevens – District Councillor, who was at a Planning Board meeting, and Gloria Cawood – County Councillor, who was unwell. Councillors were asked to consider whether a change of meeting date to another Wednesday would be a possibility to avoid clashing with the Planning Board. The District Councillor to be asked if this would be helpful.

3448 – Declarations of Interest and Granting of Dispensations: None.

3449 – Public Participation: None.

3450 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 9th January 2013 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3451 – Matters Arising: None.

3452 – Footpaths and Highways: It was noted that the A359 was closed at the railway bridge in Wanstraw resulting in extra traffic through Batcombe and on the road past Batcombe Lodge. Somerset Highways had also informed the Council that Horsehill Lane and the road from the bottom of the lane to Pughs Bottom Farm would be closed from March 22nd for 3 days for resurfacing works.

A meeting had been arranged with Charlie Higgins from Somerset Highways for Thursday 21st February to discuss a number of issues including the problems caused by water flowing down Walter's Lane, Frys Lane, from the footpath at the bottom of Back Lane. The meeting would be attended by the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Justin Witcombe if he was available.

3453 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report: The Clerk reported that the molecatcher had caught two moles, which would cost £90 under the terms agreed for £65 for the first mole and £25 for each further mole caught. If there was further activity with a fortnight the molecatcher would return and catch any further moles at £25 each.

The willow weaving would take place on the weekend of 23rd and 24th February and Iona FitzGerald requested that the willow structures go in place of the tyres and chain walk as there was not enough room below the cricket net. This was agreed as was the removal of the tyres and chain walk. Iona also asked if the swings and shelter could be repainted at the same time and it was agreed that the cost of the paint could come from the Playing Field maintenance budget. It was also suggested that willow be planted along the fence at the bottom of the Playing Field and the barbed wire along the fence removed, but it was noted that any cattle in the field beyond the fence would eat the willow and without the barbed wire would damage the fence. It was agreed the barbed wire could be placed on the outside of the fence.

Iona FitzGerald reported on the requests for estimates for the replacement of the fort and the moving of the swings in the Playing Field. A copy of the request had been distributed with the Agendas. Estimates had been requested from three companies, Monkee Puzzle, Komplan and Mainstay Projects, but only Mainstay Projects were able to provide an estimate. Touch Wood Enterprises who had made the presentation at the Annual Parish Meeting in 2011 also declined to offer an estimate because of the small size of the project. The estimate from Mainstay Projects was for £9,450 plus VAT.

The Project had so far raised £4,000 (plus £500 for the willow weaving) with a verbal promise of a further grant of £2,500, and it was hoped the remaining money could be raised from grants being applied for. The Clerk was asked to write to Mainstay asking for a formal quotation with details of prices for the different elements of the project. The Clerk was to make it clear that the Council could not commit to spending more money than had been raised and the proposed piece of equipment might have to be more limited if the money was not forthcoming.

3454 – County Councillor’s Report: The report had been e-mailed to Councillors. The federation of the Upton Noble and Bruton primary schools was noted.

3455 – Planning Applications: There were no planning applications to consider.

Planning Application Updates: The application for Listed Building Consent for the alterations to the scullery area to create a new utility room and cloakroom at Boords Farm had been approved.

The application for planning permission for the alterations and extensions to Rockwells House had been approved on 4th December after being amended by new plans received on November 15th, which omitted the proposed dormer windows on the north elevation of the house. The Parish Council had not been informed of either of the amended application or its approval, although the District Councillor had spoken to the Parish Council Chairman about the amendment. As this followed applications where Parish Council had not received plans in time for the meeting and where the case officer had made his decision before the Parish Council meeting, the Clerk was asked to write to the head of the planning department expressing the Council’s concerns about the District Council’s consultation of the Parish Council.

The District Council had had no objection to proposed re-coppicing of an Ash tree at Brook House, or the felling and replacement of the Cypress hedge at The Weavers House.

Hermione Graham had appealed against the refusal of Listed Building Consent for the conversion of the coachhouse at Westcombe Stables to a self-contained annexe. The appeal would be decided by an exchange of written statements and a site visit by the planning inspector. It was decided not to make any additional representation, as the Parish Council had recommended approval. The Conservation Officer had proposed changes to the alterations to the rear of the building but the applicant had not been prepared to accept these.

3456 – Annual Parish Meeting: Unfortunately Chris Sperring would be unable to speak at the Annual Parish Meeting, although he was willing to come on another date. Other possible speakers would be considered and one suggestion was the speakers at a meeting about “Fracking” that was taking place in Shepton Mallet on February 13th. The Clerk noted that the Minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting would be placed on the website, and so hopefully would not need to be read at the meeting.

3457 - Authorisation of payment: Councillors authorised the following payments:

£86.00 Society of Local Council Clerks – The Clerk’s Membership.

£22.43 BWBSL – The water supply for the Playing Field from October to January.

The bill for the electricity supply to the Playing Field would need to be paid before the next meeting, but the estimated bill received had been too high.

3458 - Other Business - Matters of Information: The Clerk reported that there was currently a consultation period on the Somerset Minerals Plan (which covered oil and gas extraction including “fracking”) and there would be a drop-in session in the Peter Street Rooms in Shepton Mallet on Tuesday 19th February.

Liz Hollis reported that she would be attending an exhibition about wind turbines at the Torr Works that would take place in Wanstraw Village Hall on February 18th. The wind turbines would not affect Batcombe.

The Chairman commented on the latest briefing on the programme to deliver superfast broadband across Devon and Somerset, noting that most areas would receive superfast broadband by Fibre to the Cabinet where fibre optic cables are laid from the telephone exchange to the nearest street cabinet – and there were no street cabinets in Batcombe.

3459 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 6th March 2013 at 7.30pm in the Old School, Batcombe.

Chris Wildridge

6th March 2013