

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

Tel: 01749 850934

e-mail: robsage@uwclub.net

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 1st May 2013 in the Jubilee Hall, Batcombe, commencing at 7.30pm.

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

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage, David Stevens – District Councillor, Nigel Woollcombe-Adams – Chairman of Mendip District Council Planning Board and fifty members of the public.

3488 – Election of Chairman and Chairman’s Acceptance of Office: The Chairman left the room and the Vice Chairman, Liz Hollis, chaired this item. Chris Wildridge was proposed as the Chairman for the coming year and there being no other nominations was duly elected. The Chairman returned and signed his Acceptance of Office.

3489 – Election of Vice Chairman: Liz Hollis was proposed by Ian Sage, seconded by Iona FitzGerald and elected as Vice Chairman.

3490 – Apologies for Absence: Justin Witcombe – who was working.

3491 – Declarations of Interest: Liz Hollis declared a pecuniary interest in item 3507 – payment of the rent on the allotments field as the owner of the field.

3492 – Public Participation: Kav Javvi asked that the trees growing into the cricket net on the Playing Field be cut back. Bridget Waddams asked the Council to consider requesting speed bumps or signs to slow the traffic in the village; Tamara Stubbs felt speed bumps were not a good idea. Bruno Cristofoli informed the Council that there would be a table football competition held at Pennysquare on the last weekend in May. A question was asked about why an extra telegraph pole had been placed at the bottom of Gold Hill; the Chairman suggested writing to Southern and Scottish Electric for an explanation. It was noted that a pile of rubble next to the Chapel was an eyesore. Adrian Stevens asked who was responsible for the footpath below Rockwells House which was wet and muddy; the Chairman noted that the Council were attempting to contact the owner at Rockwells who was responsible.

3493 – Footpaths and Highways: It was agreed to bring this item forward on the Agenda. The Chairman noted that he would be limiting all public contributions to three minutes per speaker and then invited Ginnie Jones from the Mendip Bridleways and Byways Association (MBBA) to speak about the Honeycliff bridleway. Ginnie noted that Honeycliff was the only bridleway in Batcombe and so was important as horseriders could not use footpaths. The bridleway had been severely eroded by water flowing down it, but a joint approach by the Parish Council and MBBA had persuaded the County Council to fund £5,000 of work to keep the bridleway open. Unfortunately the newly repaired bridleway had been damaged by someone attempting to drive a tractor up it. Ginnie added that although the landowner had access to a gate at the bottom of the bridleway, no one was allowed to drive up it.

The Chairman noted that the bridleway had been very dear to Yvonne Sommer, late Parish Councillor and treasurer of the MBBA. He added that he knew the landowner had not caused

the damage, and suggested that the unknown perpetrator should make a donation to cover the cost of the repairs estimated at £150.

3494 – Planning Application Updates - Correspondence regarding the building on land behind Chapel Row: It was agreed to bring this item forward on the Agenda. The Chairman noted that this item was included on the Agenda in response to his receiving a copy of a letter to the Chairman of the District Council's Planning Board from a parishioner concerned at the impact of the building of on land behind Chapel Row.

The Chairman asked the Clerk to summarise the series of planning applications by Mr Quentin Flemming which led to the Planning Inspector's decision to allow a house to be built behind Chapel Row and the subsequent planning permission for the house being built. The Clerk also summarised the correspondence received by the Parish Council, which consisted of copies of two letters from parishioners to the Chairman of the District Council's Planning Board - expressing their concerns at the impact of the house on the Conservation Area in Batcombe and at the decision of the Planning Inspector in allowing a house to be built in this location - and a letter from the current owner of the house, Mr Marc Waller, giving his apologies for not being able to attend the meeting and offering to meet with representatives of the Parish Council.

Particular concerns were raised in the parishioners' letters about the elevated position of the photovoltaic cells on the roof of the house, which did not seem to be in accordance with the approved plans for the house; the lack of screening of the house as seen from the church; the fact that the garages at The Forge had not yet been built; and the number of external lights on the house. The Clerk concluded by noting that he had spoken to the Planning Officer at the District Council who had stated that the District Council's enforcement team were investigating whether the photovoltaic cells were in accordance with the approved planning permission and confirmed that the owner would be required to comply with the conditions of the planning permission, including the building of the garages at The Forge before the house was occupied, unless he applied for a variation on those conditions.

The Chairman asked for contributions from the parishioners present and ten people spoke expressing concerns about the impact of the house on the village - raising the points mentioned above. They also expressed concerns about the decision of the Planning Inspector, and asked what could be done about the impact the house was having.

The Chairman then invited Mr Nigel Woollcombe-Adams, the Chairman of the District Council's Planning Board, to respond on behalf of the District Council. Mr Woollcombe-Adams noted that the Planning Inspector was not publically elected but appointed by the Secretary of State and would have made his decision in line with government policy which stressed the efficient use of energy. He also noted that the District Council's enforcement team were investigating whether the house was being built in accordance with the approved planning permission and the District Council would ensure that enforcement action took place if it was not. He added that there was no recourse against the Planning Inspector's decision apart from a judicial review, which would only be appropriate if the Inspector had misinterpreted the law.

The Chairman then allowed Mr Woollcombe-Adams to answer a number of questions from those present before the Parish Council considered its response. After discussing the matter, the Parish Council agreed to write to the District Council, expressing the concerns that had been raised by the development behind Chapel Row and asking the District Council to do all it could to mitigate the impact on the village. The Parish Council also decided to write to the Planning Inspector expressing the concerns raised at the consequences of his decision and to our MP, David Heath, expressing the concerns at the decision of the Planning Inspector. The

Parish Council also decided to write to the owner of the house Mr Waller and arrange a meeting with him to discuss the concerns raised. The decisions of the Parish Council were then put to those present who offered their unanimous support to the Council in its actions.

3495 – Playing Field – New Play Equipment: Before most members of the public present left, the Chairman asked Iona FitzGerald to report on the success of the Auction of Promises in raising funds for the new play equipment in the Playing Field. She thanked Kav Javvi of the Three Horseshoes for donating £13 of the ticket price of £15 for the event. The auction had raised £5,000 and further £400 had been donated making £6,400 in total. In addition, the Cheese and Beer festival at Westcombe Dairy had given £1 for every glass sold, which raised a further £500.

3496 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 3rd April 2013 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3497 – Matters Arising: Vacancy for a Councillor - The notice of a Vacancy for a Councillor had been published on April 4th after the Annual Parish Meeting and following Yvonne Sommer's funeral. No bye-election had been claimed and so the Council could now advertise that the vacancy would be filled by co-option at its next meeting. The Clerk reported that one person had already expressed an interest.

3498 – Planning Applications: Planning Application 2013/0785: Change of use to provide additional accommodation for existing Farmhouse including bed and breakfast accommodation and holiday letting. Addition of new footbridge and refurbishment of building (Re-submission). Mill Farm House, Crows Hill, Batcombe. Full Planning Permission. Planning Application 2013/0802: Details as above for 2013/0785. Listed Building Consent. This was a re-submission of a previous application that had been approved, which the Parish Council had recommended. While the internal arrangement of rooms had been changed, there was little change to the exterior and so the Parish Council decided to recommend approval on the same grounds as the previous application.

Planning Application Updates: Following the discussion at the last meeting, the Clerk had responded to the application for photovoltaic panels on Chandlers, recommending approval in line with the Council's response to the previous application.

Councillors reported that applications had been made for tree works at Rockwells House and Meadow View on Kale Street and asked the Clerk to check whether the Parish Council would be consulted on these.

3499 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report: The annual inspection of the Playing Field by RoSPA would take place in June. It was suggested that the Playing Field be rolled, but in light of the works that would be undertaken to install the new play equipment it was decided to leave this until next Spring.

New Play Equipment: Iona FitzGerald tabled a plan drawing of revised plans for the new play equipment. The new fort including a bridge, scramble net and fireman's pole and using the existing slide but no swing would replace the existing fort which was rotting and extend over the site of the current swings. The swing frames would be moved to the other side of the shelter. One junior swing would be placed in the frame of the current cradle swing and a nest swing in the frame of the two junior swings. A new toddler swing would go next to the other swings. The suspended log and the chain walk would be removed to make room for the swings. The frame of the swinging tyres would remain in place with monkey hoops replacing the tyres. And enough money had now been raised to install a zip wire behind the goalposts at

the east end of the Playing Field. A quote of £5,000 plus VAT had been received for this from Mainstay Projects. Asked if the zip wire would be safe if used by adults, Iona noted that playground zip wires were safe for use by children and adults. It was agreed to authorise the Clerk to issue an order for work to proceed once sufficient funds were in place. Money was still being collected from the Auction of Promises and a grant had been promised by the District Councillor from his funds.

3500 – Parish Council Website: It was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting.

3501 – Appointment of Staffing Committee: Liz Hollis, Iona FitzGerald and Justin Witcombe were appointed to the Staffing Committee, which would only meet to consider any complaints against or grievances by the Clerk.

3502 – Appointment of Village Hall Representative: It was agreed to defer the appointment to the next meeting.

3503 – Arrangements for Review of Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Other Matters: It was agreed to follow the same timetable as 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.

3504 – Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31st March 2013: A copy of the financial statements had been distributed with the Agendas. It was agreed to defer consideration of these until the next meeting when the internal auditor's report would be available and the Annual Return to the external auditor would also be considered. The Clerk noted that the new external auditor, Grant Thornton, had put back the deadline for sending in the Annual Return to the end of June, allowing these items to be considered at the next meeting.

3505 – Precept and Update on Budget for Year Ending 31st March 2014: The Clerk reported that the precept of £7,200 had been paid into the Council's bank account and the VAT repayment of £335.50 had been claimed. An update on the budget for the current year had been distributed with the Agendas, but it was agreement to defer consideration of this until the next meeting.

3506 – Change of Bank Signatories: With the loss of Yvonne Sommer and resignation of Bryan Mead, the Chairman and Vice Chairman were the only members of the Parish Council who could sign cheques. A resolution was passed to add Iona FitzGerald to the current signatories and it was agreed to discuss a fourth signatory at the next meeting.

3507 - Authorisation of payment: Councillors authorised the following payments, with Liz Hollis excluding herself from the authorisation of the first item:

- £200.00 T & E A Hollis – Lease of allotments field.
- £28.10 The Parish News – Photocopying.
- £141.00 Mr G Sparkes – Grass cutting for March and April.
- £17.78 Southern Electric – Playing Field Electricity.
- £269.79 Broker Network Ltd – Insurance premium.

3508 - 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:

5th June 3rd July 7th August 4th September 2nd October 6th November
4th December 8th January 5th February 5th March 2nd April 7th 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. Liz Hollis gave her apologies for the next meeting.

3509 - Other Business - Matters of Information: Discussion of Farmfest was deferred to the next meeting. There would be a Rural Housing Seminar on Tuesday May 14th at Edington Village Hall and the Clerk was asked to book to places. The Clerk reported that there would be a seminar on Unconventional Gas Extraction in Wells Town Hall also on May 14th. Jayne Cox stated that she was willing to act as the Parish Paths Liaison Officer in place of Yvonne Sommer – to be agreed at the next meeting.

Chris Wildridge
5th June 2013