

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 8th January 2014 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 7.30pm.

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

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage.

3606 – Apologies for Absence: Chris Wildridge - Chairman.

3607 – Declarations of Interest and Granting of Dispensations: Ian Sage and Jayne Cox declared interests in item 3619 – authorisation of payment of the Clerk’s salary and expenses – as relatives of the Clerk.

3608 – Public Participation: None.

3609 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 4th December 2013 were approved and signed by the Vice Chairman.

3610 – Matters Arising: None.

3611 – County and District Councillors’ Reports: None.

3612 – Lease of Coney Wood: Iona FitzGerald stated that she would be willing to serve on a working party to look into the leasing of Coney Wood. Consideration of whether to set up a working party was deferred to the next meeting in the hope that Oliver Moberly would be able to attend.

3613 – Footpaths and Highways: Justin Witcombe noted that the finger post at the end of Back Lane near the Round House had been moved many years before in anticipation of works to widen the junction which had never been undertaken. He suggested that the Parish Council ask Somerset Highways if they could undertake this work. It was agreed to consider the suggestion at the next meeting. Justin also noted that Raymond Clarke had been doing work to clean out and improve road drains. The Clerk was asked to write and thank him.

It was noted that the lettering on the finger posts by the Old Post Office were painted over so the lettering was not visible. It was also noted that there were still problems with the road from Westcombe to Stoney Stratton. It was agreed that items of concern on the roads should be raised at the next meeting, to be reported to Somerset Highways.

3614 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report: The Clerk reported that there was no more evidence of a mole in the Playing Field. Justin Witcombe had removed the rotten gate from the Playing Field. He was asked to keep the gate furniture and the padlock and chain. It was noted that the February meeting was the deadline for finding a new gate on e-bay.

Another section of rotten wood and ivy had blown off the pollard Horse Chestnut. Tristram FitzGerald had cut the remaining stump down to the level of the seat built around the tree. It was agreed to keep the stump at this level as removing it would destroy the seat.

Health and Wellbeing Budget: Iona FitzGerald suggested applying for a grant for additional seating in the Playing Field from the County Councillor's Health and Wellbeing budget. Iona was authorised to apply for such a grant.

3615 – Planning Applications: Planning Application 2013/2410/HSE – Demolition of rear porch and outbuilding and erection of single storey extension to the rear elevation. 12 Kale Street, Batcombe. Householder Application. The deadline for consultations had passed and so the application was not considered. The Clerk reported that the application had been received shortly before Christmas with a deadline two days before this meeting. In the past there had been no problems in extending the deadline, so the Clerk had not been concerned when unable to contact the case officer before Christmas, but when the case officer was contacted in the New Year discovered that the deadline could not be extended.

An application for an extension at Greenhills on Chapel Row had also been received but too late to be included on the Agenda. The deadline for this application could not be extended until the next meeting so the Vice Chairman called an extraordinary meeting for Thursday 23rd January at 7.15pm.

Planning Application Updates: The appeal against the refusal of planning permission to convert the stables at Crows Hill into a residential dwelling had been dismissed. The Planning Inspector had noted that the National Planning Policy Framework stated that local planning authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there were special circumstances, none of which applied in this case.

A Planning Contravention Notice had been served on Mr Waller for a suspected breach of planning control regarding the house behind Chapel Row. The suspected breach being that the solar panels had not been mounted in accordance with approved plans. Mr Waller had 21 days from the serving of the notice dated December 16th to provide the District Council with information regarding the suspected breach.

An application for the approval of details reserved in the permission for the demolition of the existing outbuildings and replacement with a timber framed double garage with log store, the re-building of the lower level office building in timber with a green roof and the replacement of the existing lean-to sunroom with a timber framed glazed extension at Millards Hill House has been approved.

The District Council had approved the details reserved in the permission for the works at Millards Hill House.

3616 – Allotments: The Clerk reported that the rent had been received for 9½ allotments. The holder of the remaining half allotment wished to give it up and it was agreed to rent this half allotment to an existing allotment holder.

3617 – Annual Meeting 2014: The Vice Chairman and John Sommer volunteered to meet with the Chairman to organise an exhibition of Batcombe Enterprises at the Annual Parish Meeting. A speaker on Crime Prevention was suggested as an alternative if the exhibition did not prove possible. To be reviewed at the next meeting.

3618 – Budget and Precept 2014/15: The Clerk reported that the District Council would be passing on 100% of the Council Tax Support (CTS) grant for 2014/15 to parishes, which for Batcombe would mean a grant of £73.10 - £30.09 less than the grant for 2013/14. The reduction was due to the increased impact of Council Tax Support in certain areas of the region. The District Council had extended the deadline for submission of precepts to January 31st to allow parishes to consider reducing their precept by the amount of the CTS grant. After

consideration the Council decided to reduce the precept by £50 to £7,400 as there was no guarantee the CTS grant would be passed on in future years.

The District Council had also informed the Clerk that the tax base for Batcombe for the coming year had been calculated as 191.88 which was 10.98 less than the current year. This meant that the increased precept would result in a slightly higher Council Tax increase than original thought. The Chairman had asked the Clerk to find out the reason for the decrease in the tax base and Mendip had provided the details of the calculations of the tax base for the current and coming years. Although the number of dwellings with the 25% single adult discount the number of empty properties had both increased, these changes alone did not seem to account for the reduction in the tax base. The Clerk was checking with the District Council as to whether there was an error in the calculations.

3619 - Authorisation of payment: Councillors authorised the following payment:

£803.40 The Clerk – Salary for 3rd Quarter.

£94.67 The Clerk – Expenses for 3rd Quarter.

£30.65 The Parish News – Photocopying. The bill was for £31.25, but due to a bank error 60p had been overpaid to The Parish News on a previous payment.

3620 - Other Business - Matters of Information: The Vice Chairman noted that there would be a meeting with the PCSO in February.

Justin Witcombe reported that a Polish articulated lorry had tried to get through the village on its way to Peter Green Chilled at Evercreech. It was suggested that the company be asked to remind drivers that it was not possible to come through Batcombe. It was noted that the Somerset Highways salting lorries had had difficulty getting through the village due to inconsiderate parking. Concern was raised about the driving of delivery vans.

The Vice Chairman reported that the Chairman had spoken to Nigel Humphries from the local branch of the Royal British Legion about possible commemorations of the centenary of the First World War. It was noted that there may be funding available for the repair of war memorials. The Chairman had also noted that there would be a meeting on green energy taking place in Wells Town Hall on January 14th.

3621 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 12th February 2014 at 7.30pm in the Old School, Batcombe.

Chris Wildridge
12th February 2014