

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 4th September 2013 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 8.00pm.

Present - Councillors: Chris Wildridge – Chairman, Jayne Cox, Liz Hollis, John Sommer and Justin Witcombe.

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage, and four members of the public. The Chairman explained to Councillors that he had asked Mike Humeniuk to take some photographs during the meeting for the Parish Council website.

3544 – Apologies for Absence: Iona FitzGerald and Ian Sage – who was working.

3545 – Declarations of Interest and Granting of Dispensations: None.

3546 – Public Participation: None.

3547 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 3rd July 2013 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3548 – Matters Arising: None.

3549 – Batcombe Community Store and Café: It was agreed to bring this item forward on the Agenda. A proposal by three parishioners for a community store and café had been distributed with the Agendas. Mike Sinfield stated that a questionnaire about the proposal was being distributed throughout the parish. Jo Webber added that a public meeting would be held in October to discuss the proposal.

It was suggested that the Parish Council should reserve judgement on the proposal until after the public meeting, so that the Council could reflect on the views of the parish. In light of this suggestion, it was agreed to consider the proposal in November after the public meeting.

3550 – Footpaths and Highways: Strimmer Project – John Sommer and Justin Witcombe had been nominated as volunteers for the project to the County Council. John had arranged the required training later in September, which would cost the Parish Council £60. Although an experienced user of a strimmer, Justin would also have to do the training unless he was able to provide a strimmer certificate.

The Chairman reported that he had e-mailed Charlie Higgins at Somerset Highways to thank him for the work on Walter's Lane and asking about progress on the similar work on Fry's Lane. This was ongoing but would need discussing with the new owner of the Frys Lane Cottage. The Chairman had also mentioned damage done by a lorry outside Lower Farm and the trench in the road on the A359 junction. Mike Humeniuk noted that the road by Lower Farm had been repaired.

3551 – Playing Field – New Play Equipment: The new play equipment had been installed and a post-installation safety inspection undertaken at a cost of £395 (+ VAT). The new equipment had been insured at an additional cost of £42.99 and was opened by Mary Sage at a celebratory tea party on July 19th, when Mainstay Projects were paid the outstanding £13,005

for the equipment. The promised £500 grant from the District Council had not yet been received and Iona FitzGerald was chasing this up. £150 had been received for the last promise from the Auction of Promises. The Clerk noted that if the post-installation inspection was included, the Playing Field improvement funds currently had a deficit of £767, but would be reduced by the District Council grant. He also noted that the Council had budgeted some money for the annual inspection and maintenance of the Playing Field. The cost of the paint for the swings (£60.53) had been taken from the maintenance budget, and thanks were recorded to the members of Keep on the Grass who painted the swings and the shelter. It was agreed to invite the members of Keep on the Grass to the next Parish Council meeting to formally thank them and to wind up the Working Party.

Maintenance Report and Safety Issues: The molecatcher had caught seven moles in the Playing Field at a cost of £45 plus £10 per mole, a total of £115. The problem appeared to have been dealt with, at least for the time being. The water fountain had been repaired by Mainstay Projects while they were installing the new play equipment. There had been some minor damage to the willow play structure, and Jayne Cox volunteered to ask Floss Barnett-Howland, who had organised the Willow Weaving Day, whether this could be repaired.

The low hanging branches from the trees in the Playing Field needed to be cut back. The Clerk reported that Iona FitzGerald had suggested that the Chairman inspected that trees with her husband Tristram to see what needed doing. If the work was minor, he would undertake it without payment or if more substantial work was needed would provide a quote. The main gates to the Playing Field needed to be replaced soon. They had fallen apart that day and the Clerk had repaired them. Jayne Cox would ask Ian Sage if he could get a new pair of gates from Read Agriservices, the estimated cost of these being £110.

The RoSPA inspector had been very impressed with the new equipment and the Playing Field. Electronic copies of his report had been sent to Councillors. A number of minor issues were raised in the report which had since been dealt with. The Playing Field hedge needed cutting back from the new fort which was done by Geoff Sparkes (as usual at this time of year). The electricity pole stay needed encasing in a hi-viz sheath which had now been done. The run-out from the slide needed extending and the height of the basket swing needed adjusting – both were done on the afternoon of the inspection by Mainstay Projects. There was some chain wear on the existing swings which needs to be monitored and replaced at 40%. The string attaching the netting to the goal posts needed to be replaced with ties. The inspector also suggested displaying a notice saying who to contact to report any concerns about the equipment and the location of the Playing Field in case the emergency services needed to be called out. The Clerk had placed a temporary laminated notice which could be replaced with a more permanent one.

A complaint had been received from a resident who had found six large pieces of dog faeces in the playbark under the fort when she took her grandchildren to play there. The Chairman noted that people had taken dogs into the Fete that were not on a lead. He felt that a spring was needed on the pedestrian gate and a new notice stating that dogs were not allowed in the Playing Field. Kav Javvi noted that there was no drain by the water fountain in the shelter and this meant that a large puddle of water had developed on the shelter floor during the Fete. The Chairman asked that options for providing a drain be placed on the October Agenda.

The PCC had asked for permission to use the Playing Field for the Fete, which the Clerk had assumed the Parish Council would allow. The Clerk had had some concerns over the state the Playing Field had been left in after the Fete. The Chairman had had discussions with Rob Jones, the main organiser of the Fete, and they had agreed the following recommendations: that in future years there should be an inspection of the Playing Field before the Fete; that where necessary play equipment should be secured for safety reasons; and that there should be

a further inspection on the Tuesday morning after the Fete to ensure the Playing Field was safely usable as a children's play area. The Clerk would also receive a copy of the Fete safety plan when it was produced. It was noted that the Playing Field could not be closed on the day of the Fete as it was a bank holiday.

Concerns were raised about the state of the surface of the Playing Field and it was suggested that it be rolled when the ground was softer. Kav Javvi noted that the goalmouths needed looking at and it was suggested that the goals could be removed and these areas rolled as well. It was agreed to look at this again in January.

3552 – Coney Wood – Lease of the Wood: The Clerk reported that the Woodland Trust had stated that if the Parish Council did not lease Coney Wood they would consider publically advertising the lease, subject to covenants requiring public access to be maintained and the site to be managed as amenity woodland. It was felt that there were too many potential liabilities in taking on the lease with little advantage as the wood would have to be maintained as amenity woodland with public access by whoever took on the lease. The Clerk was asked to write to the Woodland Trust stating that the Council was not in a position to take on the lease at present.

3553 – Planning Applications: Planning Application 2013/1556: Conversion of barn to dwelling. Barn at Henley Grove Farm, Henley Grove, Bruton. Full Planning Permission. Henley Grove Farm was in Milton Clevedon parish, and the Parish Council was consulted as a neighbouring parish. There were no objections to the proposed conversion and the Council agreed to recommend approval.

Planning Application Updates: The application to convert the stables at Crows Hill to a dwelling house had been refused on the grounds that it would have an urbanising affect on the rural character of the area and its rural location would make it an unsustainable development.

The application for the demolition and replacement of the bungalow at Hedgestocks had been approved.

3554 – Parish Council Website: Mike Humeniuk stated that he would charge £40 to take the photographs and this was agreed. The photographs would go on the website if Councillors were happy for them to. Councillors could also make use of proxy e-mail addresses on the website if they wished. The Chairman stated that he would like to develop the information provided by different organisations in Batcombe on the website. The Clerk reported that he had put a short note in the August magazine offering to put information about any organisation in the parish on the website but had had no response. He had added the Film Society programme for their coming season to the Clubs and Societies page. The Chairman would like to consider adding a calendar to the website. This would require upgrading the website and would cost an extra £60 a year, to be considered when setting the budget for the coming year in November.

3555 – Budget Update and Projection for 2013/14: In light of the significant amount spent on the Playing Field over the summer, the Clerk had prepared a Budget update and projection for the year which had been included with the Agendas.

The purchase of the new play equipment meant that VAT for the period from April to July came to £2,991.79. The Clerk had submitted a claim for this amount, which HMRC had paid – the Parish Council would have been short of money by the end of the year if the VAT had been reclaimed at the year-end as usual.

Other items were largely as budgeted at present. The Parish Council had received an additional £103 from the District Council in the form of a Council Tax Support Grant. It was noted that the Parish Council would need to spend an estimated £110 on new gates for the Playing Field at some point this year.

The National Association of Local Councils and the Society of Local Council Clerks had agreed a recommended 1% pay increase for Clerks, to be backdated to April 2013. The Parish Council agreed this increase in the Clerk's salary.

The Parish Council had agreed an additional £100 grant for the Children's Christmas Treat, and that £100 a year could be spent by the Allotment Holders' Group. £750 was budgeted for repairs to the War Memorial garden wall but these were not urgent. The cost of strimmer training for both John Sommer and Justin Witcombe was included under footpath maintenance.

The projection showed that the Council would have about £3,400 in its funds at the end of the year, of which about £800 was money earmarked for the allotments. This left a low but sufficient reserve which would need to be built up to prepare for the possibility of a contested election in 2015.

3556 - Authorisation of payment: Councillors authorised the following payments:

- £24.40 The Parish News – Photocopying.
- £96.00 Mr G Sparkes – Grass cutting for August.

The following payments were authorised retrospectively as payment needed to be made before the meeting:

- £13,005 Mainstay Projects – Outstanding amount for new play equipment.
- £42.99 Broker Network Ltd – Additional insurance for new play equipment.
- £474.00 Playsafety Limited – Post installation inspection of new play equipment.
- £60.53 Sasha Smith-Bingham – Paint for Playing Field swings.
- £24.25 BWBSL – Water supply to Playing Field (Bristol Water).
- £115.00 Pestwright – Molecatcher for seven moles caught in Playing Field.
- £20.26 Southern Electric – Electricity supply to Playing Field.
- £144.00 Mr G Sparkes – Grass cutting and hedge trimming in the Playing Field.

3557 - Other Business - Matters of Information: Waveform Music Festival – The Clerk reported that South Somerset District Council had notified the Parish Council of an application for a licence to hold this music festival at Gilcombe Farm in early September shortly before the deadline for representations. After consulting the Chairman, the Clerk had made a representation on behalf of the Council calling for similar conditions as had been applied to the Sunrise Festival and to Farmfest. As the police and environmental officers had concerns about the application a hearing had been called to consider the application, at which Liz Hollis had represented the Parish Council. The hearing had been adjourned for the applicants to supply additional information, but they had then withdrawn their application.

The Clerk was asked to check with SALC about the availability of training courses for new Councillors.

3558 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 2nd October 2013 at 8.00pm in the Old School, Batcombe.

Chris Wildridge
2nd October 2013