

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 2nd October 2013 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 8.00pm.

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

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage, and three members of the public.

3559 – Apologies for Absence: None. The Clerk to ask the County and District Councillors if they could send a report to the Parish Council if they were not able to attend meetings.

3560 – Declarations of Interest and Granting of Dispensations: Ian Sage and Jayne Cox declared an interest in item 3570 – authorisation of payment of the Clerk's salary and expenses – as relatives of the Clerk. Iona FitzGerald declared a pecuniary interest in items 3566 and 3567 – possible tree works in the Playing Field and planning applications for tree works – as the wife of the tree surgeon.

3561 – Public Participation: Kav Javvi reported that the Batcombe cricket ground by Penny Square was being resurrected and it was hoped to be playing there next year.

3562 – Keep on the Grass: This item was brought forward as members of Keep on the Grass were present. The Chairman noted that following a presentation to the Annual Parish Meeting two years ago, a Working Party had been set up to undertake the provision of new play equipment for the Playing Field; and that as the work was now complete it was appropriate to wind up the Working Party. On behalf of the Parish Council the Chairman thanked everyone who had been involved with the Working Party and the project for doing a tremendous job in providing the new play equipment, which everyone was very happy with.

3563 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 4th September 2013 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3564 – Matters Arising: The Chairman reported that he had dealt with the payment for the photographs taken at the last Parish Council meeting.

Coney Wood – The Clerk reported that he had informed the Woodland Trust that the Parish Council are not in a position to take on the lease of the wood at present. The Trust had replied to say that they would consider advertising locally for a private lessee but still subject to lease covenants for maintenance of public access and management as amenity woodland.

Community Store and Café – to be considered at the November meeting after the public meeting organised by the proposers of the scheme.

Training for New Councillors – SALC were providing a training course for new Councillors on November 6th at Edgar Hall in Somerton at a cost of £25 each. The Clerk to book Justin and John on the evening course.

3550 – Footpaths and Highways: Strimmer Project – John Sommer and Justin Witcombe had undertaken the strimmer training course and were now awaiting their certificates. The

training had cost the Parish Council £120 plus VAT as previously agreed and this had had to be paid before the training.

Parish Paths Liaison Officer – The Clerk reported that Jayne Cox was now officially registered as the Parish Council’s PPLO with the County Council. Jayne noted that the footpath at the bottom of Mill Lane was now vastly improved after she had asked the owners of Rockwells House to look into the cause of the water making the footpath so muddy. The Clerk to write a letter thanking the owners.

Road repairs – It was noted that the trench in the road at the junction with the A359 had been repaired and that Mill Lane had been resurfaced. A problem with the road surface on Millards Hill was noted.

Vehicle speeds - The Chairman expressed concerns about vehicle speeds in the village. He noted that there had recently been an accident in the parish causing damage and minor injuries and stated that he had been approached by a rider’s representative reporting that there was a problem with drivers going too fast past horses. A speed limit with all the necessary signs was not wanted, but there was a need to make people aware of the need to drive considerately. The Chairman volunteered to write a piece about vehicle speeds for the next parish magazine. Jayne Cox noted that inconsiderate parking was also a problem.

3566 – Playing Field – Keep on the Grass: The Clerk reported that the £500 grant for the new play equipment had now been received from the District Council and thanked Iona FitzGerald for chasing this up.

Maintenance Report: The Clerk reported that there was renewed evidence of a mole in the Playing Field. It was agreed to monitor the activity of the mole before contacting the molecatcher again.

The Clerk reported that he had received a complaint from a user of the Playing Field that another user had a dog in the Playing Field which had frightened her daughter. Although the dog had been removed it had been brought back into the Playing Field after the person complaining had left. The Clerk also reported that he had had to remove dog faeces from the Playing Field.

It was agreed that the Playing Field should be made more secure from stray dogs by replacing the vehicle gates which were falling apart and making sure the pedestrian gate closed automatically. Iona FitzGerald volunteered to talk to Anthony Greenhaugh at Mainstay Projects about making the pedestrian gate self-closing. Ian Sage reported that he had been looking at possible metal replacement gates that would cost around £100 on e-bay, but had not been successful in bidding for those that had come up.

It was also agreed that the Clerk should buy two new signs that read “Children’s Play Area - No Dogs Allowed”. There was also a discussion on whether there should be an area away from the gate where dogs could be tied up although it was noted that dogs tended to be more aggressive when tied up.

Ian Sage also reported that he had asked Kicko Cox for a quote for lying the Playing Field hedge which had been discussed at a previous meeting.

Tree Works and Survey: Iona FitzGerald left the room for this item. The Chairman had met with Tristram FitzGerald to consider the works that need to be done to the branches from two oak trees overhanging Philip Clarke’s field that needed to be raised to allow tractors to pass underneath them. Tristram had also suggested some minor surgery on the Playing Field side of the largest oak and the removal of a regenerated sycamore which was inhibiting the growth of the two oaks behind the cricket net, and was willing to undertake the work free of charge in

return for any wood removed. Justin Witcombe stated that he had offered to help Tristram with the work on the trees and so left the room for the remainder of this item. It was agreed to undertake the tree works recommended by Tristram and to accept his offer to do the work in exchange for the wood removed.

As the Playing Field was in the Conservation Area, an application for the suggested tree works had been made to the District Council, which had then consulted the Parish Council. [There was no fee for the application, which did not commit the Parish Council to undertaking the works.] The Parish Council agreed to recommend approval of the application as there were no objections to the proposed tree works.

Tristram had also offered to carry out a survey of the trees in the Playing Field and produce a written report for £50, which was less than the normal rate for such a report. While there was no requirement for such a survey, the Council felt that but it would be valuable to have a safety report on the trees in the Playing Field and agreed to ask Tristram to produce the report.

3567 – Planning Applications: Planning Application 2013/1885: Fell sycamore to ground level. Kings Hayes House, Gold Hill, Batcombe. Tree works. Iona FitzGerald informed the Council that the Sycamore was on the boundary with the Old Rectory, was damaging the boundary wall and the neighbours had requested its removal. It was also one of two Sycamores growing side by side and its removal would allow the other to mature unaffected. Iona then left the room while the Council considered the application and decided to recommend approval as there were no objections to the felling of the tree.

The Clerk noted that the Parish Council had been notified of an application for Listed Building Consent for work at the Weavers House in Kale Street but the notification had been too late for the application to be included on the Agenda. He had spoken to the case officer who was happy for the Parish Council to make its recommendation at its next meeting.

Planning Application Updates: The Clerk reported that Mr David Willis had appealed against the decision to refuse planning permission to convert the stables at Crows Hill to a dwelling house. The Clerk had written to the Planning Inspector asking for a copy of the decision and restating the Parish Council's concerns that allowing this application would set a precedent to circumvent planning policy against building dwellings in open countryside.

The Clerk reported that the applications for planning permission and Listed Building Consent for the restoration of the Old Cider House and its conversion to an annexe to the Weavers had been approved, with the condition that it should not be occupied as a separate dwelling.

3568 – Parish Council Website: Councillors were shown copies of the photographs taken at the last meeting and draft website page with cropped photographs. The Chairman, Vice Chairman, Justin Witcombe and John Sommer were happy for their photographs to appear on the website. The Clerk was asked to investigate the setting up of proxy e-mail accounts for Councillors on the website that would send e-mails to their personal accounts.

3569 – External Auditor's Report: The Clerk presented the external auditor's report from Grant Thornton. No matters had come to their attention "giving cause for concern that the relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met". However, they did wish to bring to the attention of the Parish Council that where insurance values were used for fixed assets these values should be fixed and not increased as the actual insurance value increased each year. The Clerk to amend the values given in the Schedule of Assets accordingly. The Clerk also reported that the Notice of Conclusion of Audit had been published.

3570 - Authorisation of payment: Councillors authorised the following payments:

- £120.00 Grant Thornton – Audit fee.
- £96.00 Mr G Sparkes – Grass cutting for September.
- £811.36 The Clerk – Salary for 2nd Quarter. This included the increase in salary that had been backdated to April. No tax was due to be paid.
- £94.52 The Clerk – Expenses for 2nd Quarter.

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

- £144.00 Blake Training Limited – Strimmer training for volunteers.

3571 - Other Business - Matters of Information: Bank signatories – The Clerk reported that the change of bank signatories had been delayed as the bank had lost the copies of the identification for one of the new signatories.

The Clerk reported that the rent for the allotments would be due on November 1st and that he would be sending reminders of this to the allotment holders beforehand.

The Community Council for Somerset's AGM would be taking place on Thursday 17th October at Stoke St Gregory. As no one was available to attend, it was agreed to complete a proxy form allowing the chairman of the meeting to vote on the Parish Council's behalf.

Iona FitzGerald asked if the water in the river had ever been tested. It was noted that this was the responsibility of the Environment Agency, but swimming in the river was not advisable.

3572 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 6th November 2013 at **7.30pm** in the Old School, Batcombe.

Chris Wildridge
13/11/13