

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

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

Present - Councillors: Chris Wildridge – Chairman.

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

As the meeting was inquorate no business could be transacted and the Chairman called an extraordinary meeting of the Parish Council for Wednesday 13th November. Under Standing Orders outstanding business was automatically delegated to the Clerk, who in consultation with the Chairman, decided to recommend approval of the application for Listed Building Consent for work at the Weavers House, Kale Street as no objections had been received. All other business was deferred to the extraordinary meeting.

Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 13th November 2013 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 7.30pm.

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 one member of the public.

3573 – Apologies for Absence: None. It was noted that no reports had been received from either the County or District Councillors.

3574 – Declarations of Interest and Granting of Dispensations: Ian Sage and Jayne Cox declared an interest in item 3587 – Terms and Conditions of the Employment of the Clerk – as relatives of the Clerk.

3575 – Public Participation: None.

3576 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 2nd October 2013 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3577 – Matters Arising: Training for New Councillors – Justin Witcombe and John Sommer had attended the training for new Councillors provided by the Somerset Association of Local Council on November 6th and had found it very helpful.

3578 – Footpaths and Highways: Footpath Maintenance Grant – The Clerk reported that he had chased up and received the £150 footpath maintenance grant from the County Council for work undertaken the previous summer.

Strimmer Project – John Sommer and Justin Witcombe had received their strimmer training certificates and would be meeting with the County Council's volunteer co-ordinator in the Spring to organise the use of the strimmer which was likely to be shared with Wanstrow Parish Council.

Parish Paths Liaison Officer – Jayne Cox had meet with the Rights of Way Area Warden and had been given the PPLO's handbook and toolkit. Jayne reported that the County Council had cut back the hedge along the Honeycliffe bridleway without disturbing the relaid surface. The Clerk was asked to write to the Area Warden to thank her for her help in doing this. Jayne also noted that the hedges along Frys Lane needed cutting back and the surface made safe for walkers and horses by removing dead wood. This was officially a highway and Somerset Highways did not have the resources to undertake the work. It was hoped that volunteers could undertake this work and the landowner of the adjacent fields would be asked if the hedges could be cut back.

Road Repairs – The Clerk reported that the repairs to Saite Lane had been completed. He received a complaint from the owner of the small patch of woodland below the corner where the repairs were made. To enlarge the ditch on this corner the contractors had taken out part of a hedge and had dumped the remains of the hedge in this patch of woodland. The Clerk had passed on the owner's request that this be removed to Somerset Highways. The warning posts for the ditch had also apparently been dumped in the woodland. The owner had put them back by the ditch and the Clerk had asked Highways to reinstate them.

Road Closures – Holly Hill and Crows Hill had been closed for three days in October to allow BT Openreach to carry out pole renewal works. Notification had been received too late for inclusion in the parish magazine but had been placed on the website. It was noted that Gold Hill from the junction with Vinings Hill to the junction with Back Lane and Kale Street would be closed for five days from Monday November 18th for drainage works. As the school buses would have difficulty in using the diversion along Back Lane, the Clerk was asked to contact Somerset Highways to see if the works could be timed so the buses could use Gold Hill.

Winter Services - The Clerk reported that Somerset Highways had published their Winter Services leaflet and the road through Batcombe from the A359 junction to Evercreech was included on the pre-salting network again this year. Somerset Highways were offering Parish Councils ten 20kg bags of de-icing materials again and Justin Witcombe volunteered to collect these from the Highways depot in Frome and Ian Sage volunteered to store them at Portway Farm. The Chairman suggested that a couple of bags be left at the Village Hall.

Diversion of Restricted Byway - The Chairman reported that the owner of Lodge Farm had consulted him over an application he was making to divert the restricted byway from the front of his house. The owner had also consulted the Rights of Way Area Warden and the Mendip Bridleways and Byways Association.

3579 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report: The Clerk reported that there had been no more evidence of a mole in the Playing Field. During a storm in October, part of the pollarded Horse Chestnut, mostly ivy and bark, had broken off and fallen onto the small tunnel from the willow play structure. Iona FitzGerald stated that her husband was willing to remove broken stump for the Council and was happy to undertake a survey of the trees in the Playing Field as agreed at the last meeting.

The wooden vehicle gates to the Playing Field needed to be replaced as soon as possible. Ian Sage was given a budget of £150 to see if he could find suitable second hand metal gates on the internet by the February meeting. He was asked to e-mail a picture of any gates to Councillors before purchasing them. A note that the Council was considering replacing the vehicle gates with metal gates to be placed on the website by the Clerk and in the parish magazine by the Chairman. It was agreed that the existing gates should be replaced with temporary gates and Ian Sage volunteered to do this.

It was agreed to consider a possible drain for the water in the shelter at the March meeting. The Clerk reported that he had turned off the water in the shelter in anticipation of cold weather.

Tree Works: The Clerk reported that no response had yet been received from the District Council on the application for the tree works in the Playing Field agreed at the last meeting, and stated that this may have been delayed because the District Council had been upgrading the computer system they used for planning applications over the last month. Iona FitzGerald noted that if no response had been received within the next week, the work could go ahead without approval from the District Council. Iona was asked to let the owner of the land the trees were overhanging know the probable date the work would be undertaken.

3580 – Planning Applications: There were no applications to consider.

Planning Application Updates: Planning Application 2013/2012 – Works in association with the installation of 3 rooflights, changes to staircase, changing window to French window in kitchen, reinstating chimney, raising ceiling on second floor and re-slating roof. Weavers House, Kale Street, Batcombe – Listed Building Consent. The Clerk noted that this application had been on the Agenda of the monthly meeting which was inquorate and as the consultation response could not be delayed further, he had made a decision on the application - in line with Standing Orders and in consultation with the Chairman - to recommend approval given that there were no objections to the proposed works.

3581 – Batcombe Community Shop and Café: Discussion of the shop had been deferred until a proposed public meeting had taken place in October. This public meeting had not taken place and so discussion was deferred until a public meeting had been held.

3582 – Parish Council Website: Councillors agreed to allow their photographs to be published on the website. It was decided not to set up proxy e-mail accounts but to state on the website that the Clerk would forward any messages for Councillors. The Chairman suggested upgrading the website package so that a calendar could be included on the website. This would cost an extra £5 a month.

3583 – New Model Standing Orders: The Clerk reported that the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) had produced new model Standing Orders for Parish Councils and recommended that member Councils amend their existing standing orders accordingly. The Clerk noted that Peter Lacey from the Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC) had suggested a number of practical amendments to the last set of model Standing Orders which the Council had adopted and suggested these amendments be retained. It was agreed that the Clerk should produce draft Standing Orders based on the new model Orders for the February meeting, when the Council could consider any changes to its existing Standing Orders.

The Clerk noted that the new model Standing Orders stated that arrangements should be made for representatives on external bodies to report back to the Council. It was agreed that the representatives on the Village Hall Trust and the Heritage Room Committee should report back after meetings of these bodies. The Chairman also suggested that there should be regular reports on the meeting of the PCSO and Neighbourhood Watch representatives.

3584 – Budget Update 2013/14: An update on the budget for the current year had been distributed with the Agendas. The Clerk noted that actual funds at the start of the year were significantly higher than those projected when the budget was produced because of money

raised for the new play equipment in the Playing Field, which was not spent until the current year.

The purchase of the new play equipment meant that the VAT for the period from April to July came to £2,992, and this had been claimed and received in addition to the £335 for the previous year's VAT – the Council would have been short of money by the end of the year if the VAT had not been reclaimed earlier than normal.

Items not related to the purchase of the play equipment were largely as budgeted. There was an additional £103 from the District Council in the form of a Council Tax Support Grant. The Playing Field maintenance consisted of £115 for the molecatcher plus the paint for the swings. There was a budgeted £110 for new gates for the Playing Field.

The Council had agreed a 1% pay increase for the Clerk backdated to April which was within the budgeted salary for the Clerk. The Clerk's salary is greater than budgeted and PAYE less than budgeted because the Clerk's tax code had changed.

The 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. It had also budgeted £750 for repairs to the War Memorial garden wall but these were not urgent. The cost of the strimmer training had been included under footpath maintenance.

The projection shows that the Council should have about £3,550 in its funds at the end of the year. Of this about £800 would be money earmarked for the allotments. The remainder would be a low but sufficient reserve which the Council should build up to prepare for the possibility of a contested election in 2015.

Included with the budget update was the current position for the allotment and play equipment funds. If the cost of the post-installation inspection was included the new play equipment had cost the Parish Council £262. However the Council would have spent about £70 on the usual annual inspection so it means the new play equipment has cost the Council under £200 thanks to the efforts of Keep on the Grass

3585 – To Consider the Exclusion of the Public for the following item: There were no members of the public present at this point.

3586 – Terms and Conditions of the Employment of the Clerk: It was noted that the Clerk's workload had increased, partly due to the creation of the website, and he was working more than the six hours a week he was paid for. The Chairman proposed that the Clerk's hours be increased to seven a week. This would cost an additional £535 a year at the Clerk's current hourly salary rate. The Clerk left the room while the proposal was considered. The Clerk was informed that the Council had agreed in principle to increase the Clerk's hours to seven a week.

3587 – Budget and Precept 2014/15: A budget for the coming year and a forecast for the next three years had been distributed with the Agendas. However, the Council agreed to defer the setting of the budget and precept for 2014/15 to the next meeting to allow consideration of where savings might be made in the budget.

3588 - Authorisation of payment: Councillors authorised the following payments:

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| £60.53 | Sasha Smith-Bingham – replacement for the cheque reimbursing the cost of the paint for the swings in the Playing Field which had been lost. |
| £50.00 | SALC – New Councillor training for two Councillors. |

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

£23.38 Southern Electric – Electricity supply for the Playing Field, July to October.
£96.00 Mr G Sparkes – Grass cutting for October.

3589 - Other Business - Matters of Information: The Clerk reported that Francis Self from the Allotment Holders Association had sent a reminder about the rent for the allotments (due on November 1st) to the allotment holders. The Clerk had so far received the rent for four of the allotments.

Bruton Town Council had asked for details of where the Parish Council had obtained the lorry sign on the A359 junction as they would like to put similar signs in Bruton.

Mendip District Council were holding another in a series of planning training sessions for Parish Councillors at the Town Hall in Wells on Tuesday November 26th. John Sommer volunteered to attend.

Jayne Cox noted that there would be a meeting for PPOs at the Jubilee Hall in Batcombe on November 21st.

Concern was raised at a reported suggestion that double yellow lines might be placed in Kale Street to ease the parking problems. It was not thought that this would be helpful and the Clerk was asked to check with the County Council whether the Parish Council would be consulted over any such proposal.

3590 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 4th December 2013 at **7.30pm** in the Old School, Batcombe.

Chris Wildridge
4th December 2013