

The Annual Parish Meeting for the Parish of Batcombe

was held on Wednesday 4th April 2012 at 7.30pm in the Jubilee Hall.

Chris Wildridge, Chairman of the Parish Council presided. Six members of the Parish Council and the Clerk attended, together with further 20 parishioners. There were apologies from Anne and Michael Page.

Chris Wildridge **welcomed** parishioners to the meeting.

Minutes of the 2011 Annual Parish Meeting were read by the Clerk, agreed and signed.

There were no **Matters Arising**.

Chris Wildridge gave the **Chairman's Report**, thanking Anne Page and Mike James, who had decided not to stand for re-election in 2011, for their contributions to the Parish Council over many years. He noted that five Councillors - Liz Hollis, Bryan Mead, Ian Sage, Yvonne Sommer and himself - had been elected unopposed, leaving two vacancies on the Council, which had been filled by the co-option of Iona FitzGerald and Jayne Cox.

There were 30 planning applications in the last year, compared to 21 the year before. Chris noted that there were major changes with regard to planning taking place and the Parish Council would have to wait to see how these would affect its role in responding to planning applications.

The Parish Council had written to the Boundary Commission expressing its concerns over the redrawing of the Parliamentary and County Council Electoral Division boundaries. It was proposed that Batcombe would no longer be part of the Somerton and Frome constituency but be included in a new Glastonbury and Wincanton constituency. In terms of the County Council it was proposed that Batcombe would be transferred from the Mendip Central and East Electoral Division to Mendip South - which would extend from Upton Noble to Butleigh, near Glastonbury.

The Parish Council had been very concerned at an application to deepen the Torr Works quarry at Cranmore by 300m to just 3m above sea level. Anecdotal evidence suggested that quarrying was already having an impact on water sources in the parish, and the impact of the deepening of the quarry could be significant as 40% of properties in the parish rely on private water supplies. Liz Hollis had represented the Parish Council at the meeting of the Regulation Committee where the application had been approved on the chairman's casting vote despite strong arguments against it. The Parish Council had asked the County Council to monitor the situation as the quarry was deepened and had appointed Liz Hollis to represent it on a liaison group with the quarry company.

Liz Hollis was also thanked for representing the Parish Council at meetings before and after the Sunrise Festival at Gilcombe Farm. The Festival the previous year seemed to be well organised and stewarded and noise had been less of a problem. There was more of a problem with Farmfest later on the same site – and as this was an older festival it had fewer restrictions on it.

The Parish Council continued to be concerned about the state of some of the roads in the parish, and followed up complaints with Somerset Highways. Chris Wildridge thanked Mrs Gill Canning of Sweetmeadow in Kale Street for cutting back the overhanging Leylandii which had been causing problems for passing high-sided vehicles and tractors. The Parish Council's Parish Paths Liaison Officer, Yvonne Sommer, was thanked for obtaining a grant of £150 for the maintenance of the footpaths once again last year.

A vacancy at Ash Tree Cottages had been filled with two local residents sharing the property. (On being informed of the vacancy, the Parish Council had written to Hastoe Housing and the District Council to remind them of the section 106 agreement and that there were local residents with housing needs.)

Following the presentation at the previous year's Annual Meeting about the refreshing of the play facilities in the Playing Field, a group called "Keep on the Grass" had begun fundraising and so far had raised £976 for the project. To assist with the project the Parish Council formed a working party consisting of members of Keep on the Grass and some Parish Councillors. An initial grant application had been unsuccessful, but others would be made and the group was exploring ideas of what was wanted in the Playing Field, while continuing to raise funds.

The Parish Council made a grant of £300 to the Village Hall Trust; of which roughly £100 paid for the cost of the Council's own meetings; £150 met the cost of village organisations using the Old School for committee meetings free of charge; and the remaining £50 was a donation to the Trust. The Parish Council also made a grant of £200 to the Parochial Church Council for maintenance of the churchyard; and a grant of £100 to Mendip Community Transport.

The Parish Council had increased its precept this year by £200 to £7,100 in order to ensure that its finances were in order, and it had sufficient reserves.

A number of informal meetings had been organised by the Parish Council Chairman to co-ordinate the activities being organised by village groups and individuals to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

The Parish Council had continued to receive no response from Parishcouncil.net, the company that had agreed to provide a website for the Parish Council, and so the Council decided to produce its own website using a template from the web hosting company called 1&1. Chris was pleased to announce that from March 2012 the Parish Council had a website, with the address batcombe-parish-council-somerset.org.uk, that would be developed over the coming months.

Hazel Davidge was thanked for acting as the Parish Council's internal auditor, and as Hazel did not wish to do this again it was hoped to find someone with some book-keeping skills who would be willing to undertake this small, but vital task.

There were no comments from the **County Councillor**, Gloria Cawood, and brief comments from the **District Councillor**, David Stevens, noting that Council Tax had been frozen for the year.

Chris Wildridge read the **Neighbourhood Watch Reports** for Kale Street from Dot Cox and for Westcombe from John Sommer. Residents were asked to report suspicious activities to the police on telephone number 101. Hazel Davidge asked if Neighbourhood Watch reports could be placed in the parish magazine.

Questions from the Floor. Steve Gilbert expressed concerns about water running from drain to drain and eroding the roads, and about wheelie bins and stones left on the side of the road which were a potential problem for children riding their bikes and for people walking at night. Chris Wildridge noted that the Parish Council had asked for a meeting with Somerset Highways and the people responsible for the footpaths to work together towards a solution to the erosion of the Honeycliff bridleway caused by the flow of water. Robert O'Farrell expressed concern about the puddle outside the Playing Field.

Conservation Area Appraisal. Chris Wildridge introduced the Principal Conservation Officer at Mendip District Council, David Clark, and his associate Rob Palmer. David Clark

noted that the Batcombe Conservation Area was first designated in 1978 and was one of 28 Conservation Areas in the District. These are areas of special architectural or historic interest and any development within them must demonstrate how it enhances or preserves the Conservation Area. The appraisal would define what makes Batcombe special and would provide a basis for assessing future planning applications. A draft appraisal had been sent to the Parish Council for consideration and a four week public consultation would follow. Any responses would be considered and then the appraisal would be taken to the Planning Board for endorsement.

Asked if any changes to the Conservation Area were being proposed, Mr Clark stated that there were no proposed changes to the boundary of the Conservation Area but the characteristics of the Area would be defined for the first time. Suggestions were made for extending the Conservation Area but it was felt that the owners of any land or properties concerned should be consulted first. The possibility of extending the Conservation Area to Westcombe was also suggested but it was felt to be too remote from Batcombe although a separate Conservation Area might be considered.

Chris Wildridge then thanked David Clark for attending and closed the meeting.

Chris Wildridge

3/4/13