

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 12th February 2014 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 7.30pm.

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

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage and one member of the public.

3626 – Apologies for Absence: Iona FitzGerald and David Stevens – District Councillor.

3627 – Declarations of Interest and Granting of Dispensations: None.

3628 – Public Participation: Louise Nicholson expressed concern about the pothole outside of Romsey Cottage and the Clerk noted that he had reported it to Somerset Highways. Louise also asked about progress on the adoption of the Mendip Local Plan and the Clerk was asked to check when parishes would be consulted. Louise also expressed interest in Batcombe enterprises being given space on the Parish Council website.

3629 – Minutes of the Meetings held on Wednesday 8th January 2014 and Thursday 23rd January 2014 were approved and signed by the Chairman, after the addition of the fact that the Chairman had given his apologies for the meeting on January 8th.

3630 – Matters Arising: Allotments – The Clerk reported that the vacant half allotment had been leased to an existing allotment holder, who had signed a tenancy agreement and paid the rent for the coming year.

3631 – County and District Councillors' Reports: The Clerk had received an e-mail from the District Councillor to say that he was pressing the enforcement department at the District Council to sort out the problems at the house behind Chapel Row, but unfortunately they were short staffed due to holidays. It was noted that the house had been given the name Ash Tree House.

3632 – Lease of Coney Wood: Oliver Moberly was unable to attend, but it was agreed to set up a Working Party to look into the possibility of leasing Coney Wood from the Woodland Trust. The Working Party would consist of the Chairman, Iona FitzGerald and Oliver Moberly and others could be invited to join. The Working Party could also take advice from Tristram FitzGerald on the potential liabilities resulting from the need to maintain the Wood. Justin Witcombe noted that there were people in the village willing to undertake fundraising for the maintenance of the Wood.

3633 – Footpaths and Highways: The Clerk to write to Somerset Highways to see if the widening of the junction at the end of Back Lane near the Round House would be considered. It was noted that the verges around the village needed cutting back and the drains jetting. It was also noted that the trough at the junction with the A359, which had been partially filled was eroding away.

It was noted that Quaperlake Street in Bruton would be closed for a month from February 24th to allow drainage works to take place and this was likely to generate increased traffic through

Batcombe. The Parish Council had also been informed that Horsehill Lane and the road from Lower Farm to Pughs Bottom Farm would be closed on March 17th for resurfacing.

A message had been received from a parishioner concerned at the amount of dog faeces littering the pavements and gutters around the village and asking if the Parish Council would consider bins for dog faeces around the village. There was a reluctance to install bins for dog faeces because of concerns of emptying them. Liz Hollis offered to write a piece about the problem for the magazine. The Clerk was asked to find out who the dog warden was and to check on the emptying of dog bins.

The Parish Council had also been contacted by a resident whose garden wall had been damaged twice by HGVs attempting to turn after finding they could not drive through Batcombe. He had contacted Somerset Highways to ask if no HGV signs could be placed at Stoney Stratton and at the end of the road past Batcombe Lodge. The Clerk to write to Somerset Highways supporting the proposal for these signs.

3634 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report: The mole had returned but it was agreed to wait another month before contacting the mole catcher. Jayne Cox offered to look into alternative methods of deterring the mole. The Clerk was asked to contact the organiser of the willow weaving to see if the willow structures damaged by the falling sections of the pollarded Horse Chestnut could be repaired.

Ian Sage reported that he had been unable to find a suitable metal gate on e-bay but offered a wooden gate. Justin Witcombe volunteered to help put up the gate. It was suggested placing wire mesh on the bottom of the gate to keep dogs out. John Sommer volunteered to paint the gate with preservative.

3635 – Planning Applications: None. The Clerk had contacted the manager of the Planning Department in Mendip regarding the recent lack of flexibility in extending the consultation period for planning applications and had been told that it was a result of a fast-track system for householder applications that was being trialled by the Planning Department. The Clerk was asked to reply to the Planning Department expressing the Parish Council's concerns about this.

Planning Application Updates: A correction notice regarding the appeal against the refusal of planning permission to convert the stables at Crows Hill into a residential dwelling had been received as one of the dates in the original Appeal Decision was incorrect. The decision to dismiss the appeal was not affected.

The application for the erection of a single storey extension to the rear of 12 Kale Street had been approved, as had the application for a replacement single storey extension to the rear of Greenhills in Chapel Row. Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent had been granted for the refurbishment of the mill building at Mill Farm and its change of use to provide additional accommodation to the existing farmhouse including bed and breakfast accommodation and holiday letting.

3636 – Review of Standing Orders: The National Association of Local Councils had produced new model Standing Orders and Parish Councils had been asked to adopt new Standing Orders based on the model. The Clerk had recommended a number of amendments to the model which had been suggested by Peter Lacey of the Somerset Association of Local Councils when the last model Standing Orders had been produced. The Standing Orders, including the amendments recommended by the Clerk, were adopted. Each Councillor had received a copy of the new Standing Orders.

3637 – Annual Parish Meeting 2014: The Chairman and John Sommer had met to discuss an exhibition of Batcombe Enterprises at the Annual Parish Meeting. They were looking for a number of competent speakers to make short presentations. They also hoped to be able to put details of Batcombe enterprises on the Parish Council website. They would report in more detail at the next meeting.

3638 - Authorisation of payment: Councillors authorised the following payments:

£87.00 SLCC – The Clerk’s membership of the Society of Local Council Clerks.

£21.56 Southern Electric – Electricity for the Playing Field – October to January.

It was agreed that the Clerk could attend a refresher training course organised by the Somerset Association of Local Councils at a cost of £55.

3639 - Other Business - Matters of Information: The Clerk reported that there would be a consultation on the Pre-submission Somerset Mineral Plan in March and early April with drop-in sessions when a planning officer will be available to discuss the Plan. It was noted that the Mineral Plan was significant because it would determine planning policies for quarrying and shale gas extraction until 2030. The Clerk was asked to put details in the parish magazine and a reminder on the Agenda for the next meeting.

John Sommer noted that the fingers on the finger posts by the Playing Field and the Round House had been mixed up when they were last repainted and asked if they could be sorted. The Clerk to contact Somerset Highways.

Jayne Cox noted that there were potholes in Portway Hill.

3640 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 5th March 2014 at 7.30pm in the Old School, Batcombe.

Chris Wildridge

5th March 2014