

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 4th February 2015 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 five member of the public.

3836 – Apologies for Absence: David Stevens – District Councillor.

3837 – Declarations of Interest: Iona FitzGerald declared an interest in item 3841 – both the tree applications – as the wife of the tree surgeon; and Liz Hollis declared an interest in item 3841 – the application at Lower Eastcombe Farm – as a neighbour.

3838 – Public Participation: None.

3839 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 7th January 2015 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3840 – Matters Arising: Event at Gilcombe Farm – Liz Hollis reported that this would be a small family event in May with a maximum of 3,000 people attending. On behalf of the Parish Council she had asked South Somerset District Council to impose the normal noise controls for an event at Gilcombe Farm with two additional monitoring points at the caravan site and in Kale Street.

3841 – Planning Applications: It was agreed to bring this item forward on the Agenda.

Planning Application No: 2015/0132/TPO: Proposed felling of TPO tree – Monterey cypress (*Cupressus macrocarpa*) – Intention to replant. Fir Tree Cottage, Batcombe BA4 6HD – Works/Felling of TPO Trees. Mr Raymond Clarke, whose property was adjacent to the tree, noted that considerable damage could have been caused when one stem of the tree failed recently and that there was canker in the remaining tree. The Council agreed to recommend approval due to concerns about the safety of the tree.

Planning Application No: 2015/0124/HSE: The demolition of existing play room and the construction of a single storey extension that spans the east elevation with the installation of rooflights, the introduction of a new dormer (east elevation) at first floor to improve bedroom and bathroom areas and a modified opening and new porch. Lower Eastcombe Farm, Eastcombe Lane, Batcombe BA4 6AL – Householder Application. The Council agreed to recommend approval as there were no objections to the proposed alterations, which were felt to be in keeping the existing building.

Planning Application No: 2014/2678/LBC: Remedial works, alteration of rear elevation, internal improvement works. 1 Sunnyside, Gold Hill, Batcombe – Listed Building Consent. Ann Biddle and Rosie Prebble, neighbours of the property, expressed concerns about the proposed removal of the internal walls which they felt would destroy the character of the cottage. The Clerk noted that the case officer was unhappy with the proposed alterations and had advised the applicant to submit revised plans but these had not been provided, so the Parish Council would need to make its recommendation on the basis of the original proposals.

The Council agreed to recommend refusal on the grounds that the removal of the internal walls would significantly damage the historic character of the cottage.

Planning Application No: 2015/0094/TCA: Willow:- Crown reduce by 2-3m and shape. Lower Farm, Horse Hill Lane, Batcombe – Works/Felling Trees in a Conservation Area. The Parish Council recommended approval as there were no objections to the proposed tree works intended to prevent future limb failures.

Other Planning Issues

The Clerk reported that the Parish Council had received a complaint that work was being done to the derelict cottage in front of Jubilee Cottage in Westcombe without planning permission. Planning permission had been granted for the renovation of this cottage in 2001 but the complainant believed that this work had not been started and so the permission would have expired. The owners of the cottage had been informed of the complaint and their builder had contacted the Clerk to state that he had spoken to the District Council who had informed him that planning permission was not required for the restoration of the cottage. He also informed that Clerk that work had been undertaken on the roof of the derelict cottage during the period of the 2001 planning permission, which meant that this permission was still valid. The Clerk had been unable to confirm the advice given by the District Council and there were also concerns over an additional entrance made to the cottage. The Clerk was asked to refer the matter to the Enforcement Department at the District Council to clarify whether planning permission was required for the work being done and if so whether the 2001 planning permission was still valid.

3842 – District and County Councillors’ Reports: None.

3843 – Footpaths and Highways: Ginnie Jones from the Mendip Bridleways and Byways Association commented on the draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2, noting that the plan had many gaps due to a lack of funding. She asked that the Parish Council be open to the cheapest option for the provision of more bridleways, which was the upgrading of appropriate footpaths to bridleways. Ginnie was asked to provide a paper for the Parish Council to consider at its next meeting in consultation with the Parish Paths Liaison Officer, Jayne Cox.

Milestone on Walter’s Lane – The Clerk reported that Somerset Highways had asked the South West Heritage Trust to look at the milestone on Walter’s Lane. The Trust had offered to reset the stone in a new hole immediately behind its current position which would reduce the risk of further damage to it. Somerset Highways had accepted this offer and the work had been carried out.

Mirrors opposite Churchbridge Lodge – Somerset Highways had received a complaint about the mirrors placed on the verge opposite Churchbridge Lodge. Highways does not allow mirrors to be placed on its property as they are considered to be more likely to cause accidents than to prevent them and had suggested that the Parish Council have an informal word with the owners of Churchbridge Lodge. The Chairman had done this.

HGV stuck on Saite Lane – The Chairman had been informed that an HGV had got stuck on Saite Lane and had damaged the verge and hedge. The Clerk had examined the lane and the verge had been churned up where a vehicle had clearly been stuck.

NO HGV signs – Rob Davey from the County Council’s Traffic Management department had responded to the Parish Council’s request for a “No HGV” sign on the road past Batcombe Lodge stating that he wished to monitor the impact of the signs placed at Cranmore on HGV traffic in the village before adding any further signs, as he was keen to avoid a proliferation of signs in an environmentally sensitive area. He suggested that the situation be revisited in the

new financial year and further action taken if required. The Clerk was asked to contact Mr Davey expressing the Parish Council's desire for a "No HGV" sign at Brickhouse Farm. Concerns were expressed about Sat Nav systems that directed HGV drivers into Batcombe.

3844 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report: The Clerk reported that there were a number of new molehills in the Playing Field, but it was decided to leave it a further month before taking any action. Several items of children's clothing had been left in the Playing Field. It was decided to advertise this in the parish magazine and then dispose of any items that were not removed. The Clerk had contacted the insurers who were happy for the new fencing to be installed by volunteers, provided they were competent and had access to appropriate tools and that a risk assessment was undertaken.

Health and Wellbeing Grant. Thanks were expressed to Iona FitzGerald and to the County Councillor, Nigel Woolcombe-Adams, for obtaining the grant of £525 for the new picnic table that had now been installed in the Playing Field. Thanks were also expressed to Mainstay Projects for installing the picnic table for the remaining £35 of the grant. A new padlock would need to be obtained for the table as Mainstay Projects would like their padlock returned.

3845 – Coney Wood: Justin Milward from the Woodland Trust had responded to the Parish Council's letter, accepting the Heads of Terms while asking for a break clause in the 999 year lease. The Woodland Trust would agree to a surrender clause in the 25 year lease, provided that it did not come into effect for the first 15 years of the lease, but could not do this on the 999 year lease. Given a choice between a 25 year lease with a 15 year break clause and the possibility of renewal after 25 years or a 999 year lease with no break clause, the Parish Council decided to consider the 25 year lease.

The Clerk reported that he had contacted the Parish Council's insurers with regard to the lease of Coney Wood, and there would be no additional premium for adding the Wood to the insurance cover and the public liability cover would be £10 million, twice what the Woodland Trust required. Volunteers would also be covered by employers' liability insurance for working in the wood on tasks such as litter picking and for taking part in fundraising events. And if aged between 16 and 90 they would be covered by the Parish Council's personal accident insurance. The insurers did ask that risk assessments and competency checks were undertaken for any such tasks and that no work was undertaken above ladder height without first checking with them.

3846 – Annual Parish Meeting: The Chairman reported that he had approached Geoffrey Mackett from the Somerset Local Authorities Civil Contingency Partnership about talking about his and the County Council's role at the Annual Parish Meeting and it was agreed to invite Mr Mackett to speak at the Annual Meeting. The Chairman reported that he had approached everyone listed in the Emergency Plan but had not had responses yet.

3847 – Local Internet Service Provision – Field Internet: The Chairman reported that he had attended the meeting in Wanstrow about the provision of superfast broadband but it was clear that BT did not intend to extend this to Batcombe. An e-mail from a resident of Trudoxhill proposing an independent internet service provision for the local area using wireless technology had been enclosed with the Agenda. The Clerk was asked to respond to the e-mail. Iona FitzGerald expressed concern at transmitters being erected on trees and buildings close to dwellings.

3848 - Authorisation of payment: Councillors authorised the following payments:

- £588.00 Coed Dinefwr Ltd – 8 seater oak picnic table.
- £88.00 Society of Local Council Clerks – Clerk’s subscription.
- £20.86 Southern Electric – Playing Field electricity.

3849 – Other Business - matters of information only: A response had been received from Scottish and Southern Energy Power Distribution to the Parish Council’s letter regarding the resilience of the power supply in Batcombe. They apologised for the interruptions to the power supply last February when adverse weather caused considerable damage to their network; and noted that the short interruptions the Parish Council were concerned about were due to overhead lines coming into contact with wildlife, tree branches etc., and while they made every effort to minimise supply interruptions, they could not guarantee a continual supply of electricity at all times as faults occurred which were outside of their control.

John Sommer noted that he and Justin had been authorised to use the strimmer to maintain the footpaths for another year.

Justin Witcombe noted that the verges needed cutting back to allow water to reach the road drains.

Iona FitzGerald was concerned that something had been sprayed on fields near the village that turned everything orange and wondered if it should have been used near buildings and water courses. It was noted that this spray was Roundup, which was safe to use near buildings and was used to spray off old pasture before it was replaced by new grass.

Jayne Cox noted that a Sat Nav had sent a car through the ford at Lower Alham to get to Westcombe.

3850 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 4th March 2015 at 7.30pm in the Old School, Batcombe.

Chris Wildridge
4th March 2015