

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 5th March 2014 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.

3641 – Apologies for Absence: Nigel Woollcombe-Adams – County Councillor and David Stevens – District Councillor.

3642 – Declarations of Interest and Granting of Dispensations: None.

3643 – Public Participation: None.

3644 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 12th February 2014 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3645 – Matters Arising: None.

3646 – Planning Applications: Planning Application 2014/0208/FUL Conversion of stables to work/live unit. The Stables, Crows Hill, Batcombe – Full Application. It was agreed to bring this item forward as the applicant was present. The applicant, Mr David Willis, stated that this application was different to previous applications for a dwelling on this site as he believed it was in accord with the District Council's policy for the conversion of rural buildings. He also noted that the extension would be hidden between the existing building and the hedge and there were fewer windows which addressed one of the concerns of the Planning Inspector, who had dismissed his previous appeal. The Clerk read a submission from David Cavender objecting to the application and noting evidence from South Somerset District Council that live/work units did not work in reality and resulted in residential development by default in locations where permission would not normally be granted.

After careful consideration the Parish Council agreed to recommend refusal, with six Councillors voting for refusal and one abstaining. The Council noted that although the applicant referred to the site as a brownfield site it was an agricultural field with planning permission for stables, and that there was a demand in the area for such stables. The Council also noted that there would be no practical way of insuring that the requirements for a live/work unit would be kept to after permission was granted. It was felt that granting permission would create a precedent that would allow residential development in the open countryside.

3647 – County and District Councillors’ Reports: Both the District and County Councillors were attending the District Council’s Planning Board meeting. The Clerk had received an e-mail from the District Councillor to say that Council tax was being frozen again for the fiscal year 2014/15; that he was chasing the enforcement officer (who had just come back from holiday) regarding action against the owners of the house behind Chapel Row; and that he would monitor the planning application for the conversion of the stables at Crows Hill.

3648 – Footpaths and Highways: It was noted that the closure of Quaperlake Street in Bruton had been postponed. Horsehill Lane and the road from Lower Farm to Pughs Bottom Farm would be closed on March 17th for resurfacing.

Jayne Cox reported that the bridleway at Honeycliffe had been damaged by water. It was noted that the problem was between the point where the repair work had terminated and the swallow hole and water needed to be piped over about 100 yards. It was suggested that the contractor be asked to price the work needed and that the MBBA may be able to meet the cost. Jayne Cox was asked to keep the Rights of Way Area Warden informed of the possible solution. Jayne also noted that she had been asked to report that a car had blocked the top of Fry's Lane.

Justin Witcombe and John Summer reported that they had met with the County Council's volunteer co-ordinator and the volunteer from Wanstrow and they now had a strimmer, letters of authorisation and a map of the footpaths.

3649 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report: Iona FitzGerald and Floss Barnett-Howland had repaired the willow structures damaged by the sections falling from the pollarded Horse Chestnut tree. Jayne Cox reported that there were no real deterrents to moles who dig up to 40 inches deep. It was agreed to delay contacting the mole catcher until the Playing Field had dried up. It was also agreed that the rolling of the Playing Field would need to be left as the ground was waterlogged.

The Clerk reported that Bristol Water had contacted him as 50 cubic metres of water had been used since the last meter reading had been taken. Bristol Water had logged this as an unexplained event and not charged the Parish Council for the water.

Ian Sage and Justin Witcombe were thanked for installing a new wooden vehicle gate into the Playing Field. It was agreed to secure a scaffold board across the bottom of the gate to try to keep out dogs and Justin volunteered to do this. The gate needed painting with preservative and John Sommer volunteered to do this.

Health and Well-being Grant: Iona FitzGerald had applied for the grant but felt it was unlikely to be successful as the Parish Council had already received a grant for the Playing Field from this source. Iona had obtained a quote of £70 for refurbishing the bench and would apply for a grant that was available to restore historic furniture. She would also apply for a grant to put hooks in the Playing Field shelter.

3650 – Planning Application Updates: Listed Building Consent had been granted for the alterations to the Weavers House in Kale Street and the appeal to allow a tile roof on the replacement bungalow at Hedgestocks had been allowed.

3651 – Review of Emergency Plan: The Parish Council had adopted a Parish Emergency Plan for Batcombe in 2008, and the recent 42 hour power cut had revealed the need to update the Plan. Nick Sommer who had produced the original Plan for the Parish Council had offered to help update the Plan. The Chairman proposed a Working Party to update the Plan and this was agreed. The Chairman, Nick Sommer and Revd Mark Ellis were willing to be part of the Working Party.

3652 – Review of Risk Management Policy: An updated copy of the Risk Assessment and Management document had been enclosed with the Agendas. It was unchanged from previous years except for the addition of the need for inspections after public events in the Playing

Field. To ensure no problems with the village fete, there would be inspections before and after the event and the zip wire would be padlocked while the barbecue was near it.

3653 – Review of Insurance Cover: The three year agreement with Came & Co was coming to an end and the Clerk was authorised to obtain an alternative quote to compare. It was noted that the insurance cover provided by Came & Co was more than adequate for the needs of the Parish Council.

3654 – Review of Asset Register: An updated copy of the Schedule of Assets had been enclosed with the Agenda. It was noted that the old playground equipment had been replaced by the new equipment and the zip wire in the Register. In addition the values of some items had been adjusted after the External Auditor had noted that, where the insurance value was used in place of a purchase price, it should not increase each year (even if the value insured did).

3655 – Annual Parish Meeting 2014: It was decided to go ahead with an exhibition of Batcombe Enterprises at the Annual Parish Meeting, after the Chairman reported that the idea had been well received by the people he had contacted. It was planned to provide different enterprises with display space and have a short résumé from a small number of the exhibitors. The Chairman hoped to be able to link the exhibition with entries on the Parish Council website. Councillors volunteered to provide refreshments for the Annual Parish Meeting.

3656 - Authorisation of payment: Councillors authorised the following payment:

£55.00 SALC – Training course for the Clerk.

3657 - Other Business - Matters of Information: Liz Hollis volunteered to attend one of the drop-in sessions on the Pre-submission Somerset Mineral Plan on behalf of the Parish Council.

The Clerk had received a phone call informing him that the Bodstock Music Festival would be taking place at Pennysquare Barn in October. This event had been of concern when last held at Pennysquare Barn in 2012, although the wet weather had meant there were no problems.

The Chairman reported that he had met with Oliver Moberly and Iona FitzGerald and proposed to establish a Working Party to explore options for approaching the Woodland Trust about Coney Wood. Jayne Cox reported that she had cleared up some of the rubbish left in Coney Wood.

Justin Witcombe noted that the Cricket Club were holding an open evening that Friday.

Liz Hollis noted that the lease for the allotments field needed to be renewed and it was agreed to consider this at the next meeting.

The Clerk reported that he had been notified that the Kimber Classic Trial, a rally of vintage MG cars, would be coming through Batcombe on the afternoon of Saturday April 12th. Jayne Cox noted another rally of vintage cars had come through in the middle of the night with no notification.

3658 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 2nd April 2014 at 6.45pm in the Jubilee Hall, Batcombe; to be followed by the Annual Parish Meeting at 7.30pm.

*Chris Wildridge
2nd April 2014*