

# BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

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**Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2014 in the Jubilee Hall, Batcombe, commencing at 6.45pm.**

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

**Also Present:** The Clerk – Rob Sage.

**3659 – Apologies for Absence:** Nigel Woollcombe-Adams – County Councillor and David Stevens – District Councillor.

**3660 – Declarations of Interest and Granting of Dispensations:** Liz Hollis declared a pecuniary interest in the renewal of the lease of the field for the allotments – item 3665 – as the owner of the field. Ian Sage and Jayne Cox declared an interest in the authorisation of payment of the Clerk's salary and expenses – item 3669 – as relatives of the Clerk.

**3661 – Public Participation:** None.

**3662 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2014** were approved and signed by the Chairman, after the year was corrected to 2014.

**3663 – Matters Arising:** John Sommer noted that he had painted the new vehicle gate for the Playing Field with preservative.

**3664 – Footpaths and Highways:** Charlie Higgins at Somerset Highways had responded to the issues raised at the February meeting. Verges and drains – Highways would look at the general condition of verges and drainage but currently the majority of their resources were directed towards dealing with safety defects. A359 junction – this would be looked at this and any safety defects repaired. Junction at end of Back Lane – Highways had no intentions of undertaking any improvement works at this junction. HGV signs and fingerposts – these concerns had been forwarded to the area Traffic Engineer, who would reply directly to the Parish Council.

Jayne Cox reported that a quote had been obtained for the repair work to the bridleway at Honeycliffe; that the MBBA were willing to pay for this; and that the Rights of Way Area Warden was happy for the MBBA to do this.

**3665 – Allotments – Renewal of Lease:** Liz Hollis left the room for this item. The Clerk reported that the original five year tenancy agreement by which the Parish Council leased the allotments field from Tony & Liz Hollis would come to an end on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2014. Tony and Liz Hollis were happy to renew the lease under the same terms and conditions and at the same rent of £200 a year, and the allotment holders group would like the Parish Council to renew the lease. It was agreed to renew the lease and a resolution authorising the Chairman and Ian Sage to sign the new lease on behalf of the Parish Council was passed.

**3666 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report:** Geoff Sparkes had begun cutting the Playing Field grass again and no new molehills had since appeared. Iona FitzGerald reported that there was a molecatcher in the village who could be approached about the problem with the

moles. John Sommer was thanked for painting the new gate with preservative. The Clerk noted that the padlock on the gate had been broken and was authorised to obtain a replacement.

Iona FitzGerald reported that the Parish Council had been unsuccessful in obtaining a Health and Well-being grant for the Playing Field. Iona also noted that one of the legs on the nest swing had come loose from its foundation and would ask the installer of the swing to make it secure.

**3667 – Planning Applications:** None to consider. However, the Clerk reported he had been informed of applications to fell a tree that was damaging Stockley Cottage and to make 1 and 2 Giles Cottages into a single dwelling, along with a new application for an extension at Cherry Tree Cottage – and so an additional Parish Council meeting was likely to be required.

**Planning Application Updates:** Reserved details at Rockwells House and at the Weavers had been approved by the District Council.

**3668 – Consultation on Draft Transparency Code for Parish Councils:** Under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 Parish Councils with an annual turnover of less than £25,000 such as Batcombe would be exempt from routine external audit. Instead, they would be subject to new transparency requirements laid out in a draft Code that had been distributed with the Agendas. The Parish Council would be required to publish the information listed in the Transparency Code online.

**3669 - Authorisation of payment:** Councillors authorised the following payments:

- £35.00 Community Council – Annual Subscription for 2014/15. Payment of this subscription was made by resolution under the s.137 power.
- £100.12 Somerset Association of Local Councils – Affiliation fee.
- £86.75 Read Agriservices – Wooden gate and fittings for the Playing Field.
- £803.40 The Clerk – Salary for 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter.
- £98.49 The Clerk – Expenses for 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter. The Clerk noted that the website had been upgraded to include a calendar.

**3670 - Other Business - Matters of Information:** The Clerk reported that a complaint had been received about the 8.7% increase in the Parish Council's component of the Council Tax bills residents had received. He noted that 2.8% of this increase is due to increasing the precept by £200. The rest was due to the reduction in the tax base by 10.98 or 5.4% as a result of the increase in empty homes and single person discounts. The Clerk noted that while there has been an increase in these discounts he did not feel these were sufficient to reduce the tax base by 11 Band D properties, and believed that the District Council had made a mistake in the calculation of this year's tax base. He had asked the Deputy Corporate Financial Advisor at the District Council to look into this, but had not received a response as yet.

The Chairman reported that Oliver Moberly was arranging a meeting with the Woodland Trust over the Easter holidays to discuss Coney Wood. It was noted that there was support for the Parish Council taking over the wood from the Woodland Trust.

Justin Witcombe reported on the Village Hall Trust meeting and that a proposal to use the main room of the Old School for a shop had proved controversial.

**3671 – Date and Time of Next Meeting:** Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2014 at 7.30pm in the Old School, Batcombe. This would be the Annual Parish Council Meeting.

*Chris Wildridge*

*7th May 2014*