

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 7th May 2014 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 7.30pm.

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

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

3677 – Election of Chairman and Chairman’s Acceptance of Office: The Chairman left the room for this item. In the absence of the Chairman and the Vice Chairman, the meeting elected Ian Sage as Chairman for this item. Chris Wildridge was proposed as the Chairman for the coming year by Iona FitzGerald and seconded by Jayne Cox; and there being no other nominations was duly elected. The Chairman returned and signed his Acceptance of Office.

3678 – Election of Vice Chairman: In her absence Liz Hollis was re-elected as Vice Chairman.

3679 – Apologies for Absence: Liz Hollis – who was unwell. David Stevens, District Councillor, and Nigel Woolcombe-Adams, County Councillor, both gave their apologies as they were attending the District Council Planning Board meeting.

3680 – Declarations of Interest: None.

3681 – Public Participation: None.

3682 – Minutes of the Meetings held on Wednesdays 2nd and 16th April 2014 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3683 – Matters Arising: None.

3684 – Planning Applications: Planning Application 2014/0636/HSE: Extension of existing porch, construction of lean-to lobby, internal alterations. Lodge Farm, Batcombe – Householder Application. Planning Application 2014/0637/LBC: Details as for 2014/0636/HSE – Listed Building Consent. It was agreed to bring these applications forward as the applicant was present.

The applicant, Mr Arish Turle, explained that the reason for the application was to provide easier access through the main door of Lodge Farm. The Parish Council decided to recommend approval as there were no objections to the proposed alterations which were felt to be in keeping with the character of the listed building.

3685 – District and County Councillors’ Reports: The Clerk had received an e-mail from the District Councillor to say that enforcement papers had been prepared for the house behind Chapel Row and would be served once approved by the District Council’s lawyers. The County Councillor had provided a summary of what had happened at the County Council over the last 12 months which was distributed to Parish Councillors. The Chairman felt that he would like to know what the County Councillor was doing for the parishes in his division and

stated that he would write to the County Councillor asking him to include this in future reports.

3686 – Footpaths and Highways: Jayne Cox reported that the Mendip Bridleways and Byways Association (MBBA) were waiting for the repair to the Honeycliff bridleway to be undertaken. The MBBA were also proposing to organise a working party to clear Fry's Lane of loose stones and cut back overhead branches.

3687 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report: The annual inspection of the Playing Field by RoSPA would take place in June. The Clerk reported that there were no more molehills. He had replaced the padlock on the vehicle gate and turned the water in the Playing Field on three times (he noted that some of the young people using the Playing Field seem to have located the stopcock). One of the legs of the nest swing had come loose from its concrete foundation. Mainstay Projects who had installed the swing did not think that it was dangerous but were re-concreting the leg that day. Warning tape had been placed on the swing to prevent its use over the weekend but some of the children had removed it.

The Council had received further complaints about dogs in the Playing Field. After discussion it was agreed something needed to be done about people bringing their dogs into the Playing Field, and it was noted that there was also a problem with dogs being allowed to roam around the village. The Chairman stated he would write an article for the parish magazine. Iona FitzGerald volunteered to speak to the owners who allowed their dogs into the Playing Field. The Clerk was asked to erect new notices stating that dogs were not allowed in the Playing Field because it was a children's play area and to prepare a letter to be sent to people whose dogs were seen in the Playing Field.

3688 – Planning Applications: Planning Application 2014/0559/HSE: Proposed single storey rear extension. Proposed demolition of existing porches and replaced with open fronted storm porch. Proposed render and timber cladding to all existing masonry on dwelling. Proposed replacement of concrete tiles with natural slate. Proposed new windows and doors. Associated internal alterations. Ivy Wall House, Back Lane, Batcombe – Householder Application. Although the render and timber cladding were not felt to be in keeping with the village the Parish Council decided to recommend approval as there were no objections to the majority of the proposals. There were concerns about the new first floor window overlooking the Jubilee Hall, which might increase awareness of events in the Hall and possibly lead to complaints and the Clerk was asked to note this concern in the response.

Planning Application 2014/0630/HSE: Demolition of existing garage and replacement with new outbuilding incorporating garage, annexe and workshop. Laburnam Cottage, Westcombe – Householder Application. The Clerk read a submission from the applicant, Mr David MacDonald. The Council decided to recommend approval as there were no objections to the replacement outbuilding which was felt to be an improvement on the existing building. The increased height of the building was not felt to be a problem as it was adjacent to the factory wall. The Clerk was asked to suggest that the standard condition preventing the annexe being used as a separate dwelling from Laburnam Cottage be imposed.

Planning Application 2014/0634/HSE: Extend existing cloakroom/utility room extension by 1.2m (north east elevation), remove window, unblock doorway and install new door and frame, erect porch canopy. First floor, north bedroom, form new opening into new bathroom. Batcombe Lodge, Batcombe – Householder Application. Planning Application 2014/0635/LBC: Details as for 2014/0634/HSE – Listed Building Consent. The Council decided to recommend approval as the external alterations would have no significant impact

on the listed building. There were concerns about the creation of an opening through the historic fabric of the building to create an entrance to a third bathroom and the Clerk was asked to add the recommendation that this should only be allowed if the Conservation Officer was happy that this would not be to the detriment of the listed building.

Planning Application 2014/0689/TCA: Blue Atlas Cedar: Fell to ground level. Netherlea, Batcombe – Works/Felling Trees in a CA. The Council had been notified of this application after the Agendas had been distributed but decided an additional meeting was not necessary. Iona FitzGerald declared a pecuniary interest as the wife and partner of the tree surgeon. Iona stated that the tree was a fine specimen but had been planted too close to Ivy Wall House and would grow much larger. In response to a question she added that pruning this type of tree was not a practical option. Iona then left the room while the Council discussed the application and decided to recommend approval as the tree was too close to Ivy Wall House.

Planning Application Updates: The Clerk reported that the District Council's Tree Officer had thanked the Parish Council for its swift response to the application to fell the tree that was damaging Stockley Cottage. It was noted that the tree had already been felled.

3689 – Music Festival at Gilcombe Farm in July: The Parish Council had been notified of a new festival called “No Mans Land Festival” proposed for Gilcombe Farm on July 4th, 5th & 6th. The organisers hoped to attract between 1,000 to 1,500 people and there would be a live music stage and marquees. The Council authorised Liz Hollis to make a representation on its behalf and to attend any subsequent meetings. It was suggested that similar conditions to those imposed upon the Sunrise Festival and Farmfest should apply to the new festival.

3690 – Appointment of Staffing Committee: Liz Hollis, Iona FitzGerald and Justin Witcombe were re-appointed to the Staffing Committee, which would only meet to consider any complaints against or grievances by the Clerk.

3691 – Appointment of Village Hall Representative: Justin Witcombe agreed to continue and was re-appointed as the Parish Council's Village Hall representative.

3692 – Consideration of a Public Meeting regarding the Proposed Community Shop: The Chairman reported that the proponents of the shop felt they needed more time to consider whether they wished to have a meeting. As a result it was decided not to consider this item.

3693 – Arrangements for Review of Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Other Matters: It was agreed to follow the timetable proposed by the Clerk: Financial Regulations to be reviewed at the June meeting (in light of new model financial regulations produced by NALC due to changes to legislation regarding audit and internal controls); policy for dealing with the press/media to be reviewed at the July meeting; the Council's procedures for handling requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998 to be reviewed at the September meeting; the Council's complaints procedures to be reviewed at the October meeting; the Council's and Clerk's membership of other bodies to be reviewed in December before the membership is renewed; and the Schedule of Assets, Risk Management Policy and insurance cover to be reviewed at the March meeting in time for the preparation of the Annual Report and renewal of the insurance.

3694 – Review of Insurance Cover: Quotes for the Council's insurance cover had been received from Zurich and Came & Co. It was decided to enter into a three year long term agreement with Came & Co at a premium of £265 as the cover from both companies was

similar, but Zurich's premium was £60 higher. The Clerk noted that Came & Co was an insurance broker and the insurance would be provided by Hiscox Local Council Insurance.

3695 – Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31st March 2014: A copy of the financial statements had been distributed with the Agendas. The precept and allotments rent were in line with the budget. An additional VAT refund for the first quarter of the year had been claimed in addition to the usual refund for the previous year. This enabled the VAT on the new play equipment of £2,890 to be reclaimed without which the Council would be short of funds by the end of the year. The Council Tax Support Grant had not been budgeted for, and the grant for footpath maintenance was for the previous year. The money raised for the Playing Field improvements (mainly from the Auction of Promises) had not been included in the budget. Bank interest remained negligible.

The cost of the grass cutting in the Playing Field was less than budgeted because there had been no increase in the price per cut and less cuts had been required. The cost of the electricity and water supplies and the safety inspection were also less than budgeted – the water supply considerably so as only one bill had been received instead of the usual two. Maintenance included the cost of the molecatcher and paint for the swings but was less than budgeted as no Playbark had been purchased for the fort. The cost of the post-installation inspection of the new play equipment was considerably more than had been budgeted for the normal annual inspection. The cost of the new play equipment (£17,340 including VAT) had not been included in the budget.

The Clerk's salary was higher than budgeted but PAYE less than budgeted due to a change in the Clerk's tax code. The combination of salary and PAYE was slightly less than budgeted for, although the Clerk had received a 1% pay increase backdated to April 2013. The Clerk's expenses were less than budgeted. Most other expenses of administration were largely as budgeted, although the insurance premium increased to cover the additional play equipment, and the Training and Publications included training for the Clerk that would take place in the current year but had been paid for in the previous year.

The grants given by the Council were as budgeted, except that an additional grant of £100 was made to the Children's Christmas Treat. The only money spent on the allotments was the £200 for the lease of the field and £27 for a new stopcock for the water tank. Fundraising expenses were the cost of tickets for the Auction of Promises. Footpath maintenance included the contribution to the repair of the Honeycliffe Bridleway and the cost of the strimmer training for two of the Councillors.

The net result of the variations against the budget was a deficit of £6,192 on the year instead of the expected surplus of £21. However, this is largely due to the money raised for the Playing Field improvements in previous years being spent. At the end of the year the Parish Council had £4,614 in its funds, £1,124 more than anticipated in the budget. Of this £846 was set aside for the allotments. This meant that the Parish Council had funds totalling £3,768 that were not earmarked for the allotments. Details of the earmarked money for the allotments and the monies raised for the Playing Field Improvements were presented on a separate sheet. This was felt to be a sufficient reserve to cover the possible cost of a contested election in May 2015 and a by-election in the same year.

3696 – Precept and Update on Budget for Year Ending 31st March 2015: The Clerk reported that the precept of £7,400 had been paid into the Council's bank account. An update on the budget for the current year had been distributed with the Agendas. In January it had been agreed to reduce the precept to £7,400 in light of the receipt of the Council Tax Support Grant of £73.10. The usual VAT refund could not be reclaimed at the end of the previous year

because of the additional claim made during that year and the fact that the VAT for the remainder of the year was less than £100 (which is the amount required to make a claim for less than twelve months). No further footpaths grants would be received as the Council was participating in the Strimmer Project. Most other income and expenses were likely to be as budgeted. The water supply will be higher than budgeted because of a bill from the previous year had been received after the end of the year. The new gate for the Playing Field had not been included in the budget for this year as the Council had expected to pay for it last year.

As a result of the above variations on the budget, the Council had a projected surplus of £161 at the end of the year instead of the budgeted surplus of £200. This would leave around £4,775 in its funds at the end of the year.

3697 - Authorisation of payment: Councillors authorised the following payments:

£141.00	Gardens of Avalon – Grass cutting for March and April.
£18.73	Southern Electric – Playing Field Electricity.
£265.00	Broker Network Ltd – Insurance premium.

3698 - Other Business - Matters of Information: The Parish Council had received a free demonstration pack from Western Power Distribution of useful items every household should consider keeping in case of a power cut, which contained an analogue telephone, a torch, a powerbank (for recharging mobile phones during a power cut), a rechargeable radio, a foil blanket, a reusable hand warmer and an information booklet.

The Chairman reported on a meeting that the Coney Wood working party had held with the Woodland Trust looking at the state of the wood and discussing possible options for its future. These options included a long lease of the wood and a possible transfer of the freehold. The Chairman stated that the working party would bring any proposals back to the Parish Council for consideration and these would then be put to a parish meeting as the support of the village would be needed. Iona FitzGerald noted that there were a number of trees in very poor condition.

Justin Witcombe noted that the Batcombe Cricket Club was officially opening its ground on Sunday 25th May with a match and a barbecue. Iona noted that the Westcombe Beer and Cheese Festival would be fundraising for the Cricket Club.

3699 - Dates of Future Meetings: The following dates were agreed for the monthly meetings of the Parish Council during the coming year, all but the May meeting being the first Wednesday of the month:

4 th June	2 nd July	6 th August	3 rd September	1 st October	5 th November
3 rd December	7 th January	4 th February	4 th March	1 st April	13 th May

The date in April would also be the date of the Annual Parish Meeting and the August meeting would only be held if there were planning applications to consider. The date of the May meeting is provisional as it depends on the date of the Parish Council elections. The Council to meet at 8.00pm in the summer and 7.30pm the rest of the year.

Chris Wildridge
4th June 2014