

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

Tel: 01749 850934

e-mail: robsage@uwclub.net

Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 2nd July 2014 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 8.00pm.

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

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage and eight members of the public.

3717 – Apologies for Absence: Liz Hollis and Justin Witcombe, who was working.

3718 – Declarations of Interest: Ian Sage and Jayne Cox declared an interest in item 3733 – authorisation of the payment of the Clerk’s salary and expenses – as relatives of the Clerk.

3719 – Public Participation: Three residents of Kale Street expressed concerns at the note the Chairman had placed in the parish magazine regarding dogs roaming the street freely, which stated that the dog warden would be asked to visit. The Chairman noted that he had received two separate complaints about dogs roaming the street freely and causing near accidents. Iona FitzGerald volunteered to speak to the owners of the dogs and it was agreed to postpone contacting the dog warden to see if this would be effective in keeping the dogs under control.

3720 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 4th June 2014 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3721 – Matters Arising: Parish Council Grants – The Clerk reported that thanks had been received from the Village Hall Trust, the PCC (for the burial grant), Mendip Community Transport and Mendip Citizens Advice Bureau for the grants agreed at the last meeting. Music Festival at Gilcombe Farm – Liz Hollis had reported that the festival organisers had been very co-operative and had accepted similar conditions to those imposed on Farmfest. She had been supplied with hotline numbers for any complaints about the festival while it was in progress and the Clerk was asked to place these on the Parish Council website.

3722 – Footpaths and Highways: “20s Plenty for Us” - Jane Batchelor had requested that the Parish Council consider supporting the use of the materials provided by the ‘20s Plenty For Us’ campaign for a speed limit of 20 mph in residential areas including villages. It was noted that this was a campaign for an official speed of 20mph and that the Council had considered a limit of 30mph in 2003 but had decided against it because of concerns over the number of repeater signs that would have to be erected. Following discussion it was decided not to formally support the campaign for a 20mph limit. Jane Batchelor was willing to obtain posters and stickers for wheelie bins for any resident wishing to display them.

A Batcombe Sign for the “Lodge Road” - Jane Batchelor had also requested that the Parish Council explore installing a Batcombe sign to the north of the village on the road that became Cockpit Lane. The Clerk reported that Parish Council could apply to the County Council for a sign which would then provide a quote for the Parish Council to agree.

Managing traffic entering Batcombe - The Chairman reported that two large articulated lorries had become stuck at the corner by Boords Farm recently and over 30 hours of police time had been spent getting the lorries out. It was agreed to ask Somerset Highways to place

warning signs for HGV drivers at the entrances to the roads to Batcombe at Evercreech, Cranmore and at the end of the Lodge road. The Clerk noted that following a request by Jonathan Frost at Netherlea the Parish Council had already supported his request for warning signs but had not yet received a response. It was decided to defer asking for a Batcombe sign on the Lodge road (item above) until Somerset Highways agreed to the warning signs.

3723 – Planning Applications: Planning Application 2014/1196/HSE: Proposed extension to a single story garden room. Myrtle Cottage, Westcombe – Householder Application. It was agreed to bring this application forward as members of the public wished to speak to it. Denis and Lesley Bumford, from the neighbouring property, expressed concerns about the application. They felt that it was not a garden room being situated in a separate paddock and that planning permission had not been obtained to convert what had been a workshop into living accommodation. The Parish Council decided to recommend refusal as no planning permission had been obtained for the garden room and the Council would have recommended refusal of the conversion and change of use given that it was in a separate field from Myrtle Cottage. It was also felt that the materials used in the conversion were out of keeping with the character of the area.

Planning Application No: 2014/1110/TCA - Proposed pruning of an Oak tree in a Conservation Area. The Barn, Batcombe – Works/Felling Trees in a CA. The Clerk reported that the wrong plans had been sent for this application and that he had been unable to contact the tree officer to obtain the correct information. As the Parish Council had no information on which to base a decision it was agreed to leave the decision to the tree officer.

3724 – District and County Councillors’ Reports: There were no reports.

3725 – Footpaths and Highways (continued): Somerset Highways had informed the Council that Quaperlake Street in Bruton would be closed from August 4th to allow structural maintenance and drainage works. The work was expected to take 36 days. It was anticipated that the closure would result in additional traffic through Batcombe.

The Chairman had received reports from a resident of water flowing over Moor Lane and of damage to the small bridge to the field at the bottom of Vinings Hill as a result of the water being held back in Coney’s Wood. These concerns had been passed onto Somerset Highways, who replied that they would inspect Moor Lane and carry out any necessary remedial works, and would look at the bridge, although they were not aware of any damage.

3726 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report: The Clerk reported that the mole or moles were again active in the Playing Field. It was agreed to ask the molecatcher to deal with them.

The Annual Fete: The PCC Fete Committee had asked the Parish Council for permission to hold the annual village fete in the Playing Field on the August Bank Holiday Monday and this was agreed. The Committee had also asked the Parish Council to close the Playing Field from the Saturday evening to the Tuesday afternoon to allow the preparation and clearing up after the fete to be done safely. The Clerk noted that the Parish Council could not close the Playing Field on a bank holiday, but felt that in practice this would not make much difference. It was agreed to close the Playing Field on the Saturday evening from 8.00pm and on the Sunday and the Tuesday morning. The Clerk stated that he would immobilise the zip wire using the padlock and chain on the gate throughout this period to ensure there were no accidents. He would also conduct joint inspections of the Playing Field with the Fete Committee before and after the Fete to ensure that it was in a safe condition for use by children by the Tuesday afternoon. The PCC had also asked permission to use the Playing Field for a Songs of Praise service on the Sunday evening before the Fete and this was agreed.

3727 – Planning Applications (continued): The Clerk reported that an application by Mr David Willis to convert and extend the stables at Crows Hill to a single dwelling and to install ground mounted solar panels had been notified too late to be considered at the present meeting and would be considered at the August meeting.

Pre-Application Information: The owner of Valley View had provided plans of his proposed new dwelling for Councillors to view. Discussion of the proposal was deferred until an application had been made.

The Council had been informed by Seren Energy Ltd of their proposal to install a wind turbine at Gilcombe Farm. The proposed turbine would have a 50m (164ft) hub height and a 24m (79ft) rotor radius, and the proposed location was roughly half way between Henley Grove Farm and Gilcombe Farm. The site was in the parish of Bruton and so the planning application would be considered by South Somerset District Council. The Clerk to check that the Parish Council would be consulted.

Planning Application Updates: The application for a two-storey extension to Cherry Tree Cottage had been refused planning permission by Mendip District Council's Planning Board. The Chairman had attended the meeting of the Planning Board to speak in support of the Parish Council's recommendation of refusal and reported on the meeting.

Planning permission had been granted for the extension and alterations at Ivy Wall House. Permission had also been granted for the demolition of the garage at Laburnam Cottage, Westcombe and its replacement with a building incorporating a garage, annexe and workshop.

Planning permission and Listed Building Consent had been granted for the extension and alterations at Batcombe Lodge. Planning permission and Listed Building Consent had also been granted for the extension of the porch and lean-to lobby at Lodge Farm. And the District Council had had no objections to the felling of the Blue Atlas Cedar at Netherlea.

Clerk reported that a change in the roof materials at Green Hills, Chapel Row from tiles to grey GRP with timber cored rolls had been allowed as a non-material amendment.

Mendip Local Plan Part 1: Strategy and Policies: Post-submission Main Modifications: The draft Plan had been submitted to the Secretary of State on 9th December 2013 and examination hearings had been held in April. A number of soundness issues had been identified and as a result Post-submission Main Modifications were proposed and representations were invited. The Clerk reported that none of the modifications would appear have a significant impact on Batcombe and it was agreed not to make a representation.

3728 – Coney Wood: Iona FitzGerald and her husband Tristram had met with an expert from the Woodland Trust to discuss the health of the trees in Coney Wood and as a result had no major concerns about the trees, although as with any wood trees could fall in storms. The Chairman noted that the Working Party would continue discussions with the Woodland Trust over leasing the wood but would come back to the Parish Council at each stage.

3729 – The Community Heartbeat Project – a defibrillator for Batcombe? Dan Jarman from Westcombe had requested that the Parish Council consider the Community Heartbeat project which encouraged the placing of defibrillators in community locations. As Mr Jarman could not be present it was decided to defer discussion to a meeting in the autumn.

3730 – The State of the Notice Boards: The Clerk reported that the notice board on the wall of the churchyard was in poor condition and needed replacing with a more suitable one. A new notice board was likely to cost around £750 and so consideration was deferred to the

budget meeting in November. The Clerk would also look into possible grants. The notice board by the Batcombe telephone kiosk was made of recycled plastic and very strong, but could do with having a pin board in place of the current clips. The notice board in Westcombe by the war memorial also needed attention, as it was not waterproof and the Perspex on the front had become somewhat opaque.

3731 – Review of the Press and Media Policy: The Press and Media Policy had been adopted in 2011 and was felt to be adequate and in no need of amendment. The Clerk suggested that the Council adopt a Social Media Policy which would cover content on the website. It was agreed that the Clerk should produce a draft Social Media Policy for consideration at a meeting later in the year.

3732 – Review of Internal Audit: A copy of the internal auditor's report had been distributed with the Agendas. Three issues were raised in the report. One was the inclusion of significant documents such as the financial statements in the Minute Book, which the Clerk undertook to do. Second was the adopting of additional controls on cash receipts (such as from fundraising) which was discussed at the previous meeting. The third item was a request for a programme of the work the internal auditor should be undertaking. A suggested programme of testing for internal audit taken from "Governance and Accountability for Local Councils - A Practitioner's Guide (England) March 2014" had been enclosed with the Agendas and it was agreed that this was sufficient to provide a programme of work for the internal auditor. The Clerk to provide the internal auditor with a letter of engagement on this basis. As the Practitioner's Guide stated that the audit should take place through the year and not just at the end, it was agreed to provide the internal auditor with copies of the Council's Minutes through the year and to ask him to check the quarterly bank reconciliation.

The Practitioner's Guide also recommended that the Parish Council carry out a review of the effectiveness of its system of internal audit at least once every three years. A checklist for the review taken from the Practitioner's Guide had been enclosed with the Agendas and it was agreed that the Council could answer "Yes" to each section.

3733 - Authorisation of payment: Councillors authorised the following payments:

- £96.00 Gardens of Avalon – Grass cutting for June.
- £803.40 The Clerk – Salary for the 1st Quarter.
- £131.87 The Clerk – Expenses for the 1st Quarter.

3734 - Other Business - Matters of Information: The Clerk reported that the MP, David Heath, would be visiting Batcombe on Thursday 31st July as part of his annual village tour.

The Clerk reported that an allotment holder was giving up her allotment at the end of the season and that two other allotment holders wished to rent half the allotment each. The Council felt that the allotment should be advertised first.

Iona FitzGerald had been approached by someone concerned at the state of the water feature opposite the war memorial in Westcombe. It was noted that this was the responsibility of the owner of the wall where it was situated.

Ian Sage suggested the Council consider changing the time of its meetings to avoid clashing with the District Council's Planning Board meeting. To be considered at the next meeting.

3735 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 6th August 2014 at 8.00pm in the Old School, Batcombe – to consider planning applications and other urgent business.

Chris Wildridge
6th August 2014