

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 3rd September 2014 in the Jubilee Hall, Batcombe, commencing at 8.00pm.

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

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage, the District Councillor – David Stevens, and thirty members of the public.

Prior to the start of the meeting the Chairman outlined the procedures by which public participation would be allowed.

3748 – Apologies for Absence: Ian Sage and Justin Witcombe who were both working.

3749 – Declarations of Interest: None.

3750 – Public Participation: None.

3751 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 6th August 2014 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3752 – Matters Arising: None.

3753 – Planning Applications: Planning Application No: 14/3105/FUL - Single 74m tip wind turbine and associated infrastructure, including temporary wind monitoring mast (GR: 369540/136794) Gilcombe Farm, Bruton – Full application (South Somerset District Council). The following members of the public spoke against the application: Rob Jones noting the negative impact on the visual amenity, local wildlife and the value of houses. Nick Fry and Devinder Thakar, both from Milton Clevedon, noted the size of the turbine and its conspicuous nature in the local landscape. Clare Glaisher from Whaddon, Bruton spoke on behalf of her landlord [Major General Charles Fattorini], who was concerned about the noise of the turbine and its impact on wildlife, military training and property values. Mary Comley felt that the description as alternative energy was a smokescreen to cover an industrial enterprise. Chris Proud from Milton Clevedon was concerned at the impact on military flights, although the District Councillor noted that the MoD had raised no concerns. Dick Skidmore from Milton Clevedon noted that the appeal decision against a wind turbine at Charlton Musgrove had taken into account the impact on the landscape and local heritage. Mike James suggested that those with investment portfolios should look at where their money was invested.

After careful consideration, the Parish Council decided by four to one to recommend refusal of permission. While in favour of alternative energy and of wind turbines in the right place, the Council did not feel that this turbine was in the right place given the impact it would have on a largely unspoilt landscape containing a number of important heritage sites. After the decision had been made, the District Councillor noted that Bruton Town Council had also recommended refusal and noted that if the case officer recommended refusal that would be the end of the process unless the applicant appealed the decision. If the case officer recommended

acceptance the application would go to the Area Board meeting on October 8th, which members of the public could attend.

Planning Application No: 2014/1579/HSE – Remove existing conservatory and replace with two storey extension. Loft conversion. Little Acre, Batcombe – Householder Application. The application introduced herself and her children. Anne Page read a letter from Griff Williams of the neighbouring property expressing his concerns at the height and size of the extension in relation to the original building, the fact that windows would be overlooking neighbouring properties, the impact of the white horizontal fibre cement clapboard cladding, and the resulting impact on the Conservation Area adjacent to the building and the neighbouring Listed Building at Boords Farm. Anne Page then expressed her own similar views. After careful consideration, the Parish Council decided to recommend refusal on the grounds put forward by the neighbours.

3754 – District and County Councillors’ Reports: There were no reports.

3755 – Footpaths and Highways: The Parish Council had been informed that the road between Westcombe and Stoney Stratton would be closed for 40 days from September 1st to allow for drainage works to be undertaken. As requested at the previous meeting, the Clerk had contacted Somerset Highways to express concerns about access to Westcombe Dairy and was informed that arrangements had been made to allow access.

The Clerk reported that the milestone on Walter’s Lane that Sam Pick had raised concerns about at the last meeting was somewhat overgrown and leaning at an angle parallel to the hedge, but was secure and in no danger of falling. There was no evidence of an inscription and the milestone had presumably been struck by piece of farm machinery at some point.

The Clerk reported that a meeting had been arranged with someone from the County Council’s Traffic Management department to consider placing “No HGV” signs on the roads into Batcombe, but the person concerned had not turned up. The Clerk had reported potholes on Holly Hill and Snakelake Hill.

3756 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report: The Clerk reported that the molecatcher had caught five moles in the Playing Field which seemed to have dealt with the problem for the time being. Part of the cricket netting had come loose and needed to be re-tied.

The Clerk also reported that the handback of the Playing Field after the Fete had been delayed as several of the tents were too wet to take down, but took place at 6.00pm on the Tuesday – when several children were waiting to use the zip wire. The Playing Field had been cleared of equipment and litter (apart from the skittles boards) and was in reasonable shape considering the weather. The only problem area was near the gate which had been churned up by vehicles trying to exit the Playing Field.

The Playing Field Safety Inspection Report – As had been reported at the previous meeting only two items were listed in the report as medium risk: the overhead gym rings and the goalposts and in neither case was any remedial maintenance required. All the other items were low risk. The inspector recommended that the level of bark under the multiplay should be topped up (despite the fact that 20 bags of playbark had been placed there two weeks before the inspection). The inspector also noted a crack in the top bar casting of the basket swing that should be monitored, although the Clerk noted that he had not been able to identify the crack as yet. The full inspection report was available for Councillors to inspect at the meeting.

3757 – Planning Updates: Joinery details that were reserved by conditions in the planning permissions for the works at Rockwells House had been approved.

Confirmation had been received that planning permission had been granted for the extensions at Churchbridge Lodge as reported at the last meeting. The Clerk had written to the Planning Team Manager at Mendip DC, to express the Parish Council’s dismay at the fact that the application had been decided before our meeting after the Clerk had asked for an extension to consider the application at that meeting, and to ask him to contact our Chairman to discuss the issue. The District Councillor had also contacted him to express the Parish Council’s concerns.

3758 – Coney Wood – an update from the Working Party: The Chairman reported that the public meeting agreed at the last Parish Council meeting to consider the possible lease of Coney Wood would be held on Saturday 8th November to determine whether there was support in the village for taking on the lease and raising funds to maintain the wood. It was proposed to have four speakers at the meeting: Oliver Moberley the grandson of the original donor; Iona FitzGerald; Justin Milward from the Woodland Trust; and the Chairman.

Michael Page asked what the likely costs would be and the Chairman noted the main costs would be the legal fees in taking advice on the lease. The wood would also have to be maintained. The Chairman planned to put an article in the October parish magazine.

3759 – External Auditor’s Report: The Clerk presented Councillors with the external auditor’s report from Grant Thornton. No matters had come to their attention “giving cause for concern that the relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met” and there were no other matters not affecting their opinion that they wished to bring to the attention of the Parish Council. The Clerk also reported that the Notice of Conclusion of Audit had been published.

3760 - Authorisation of payment: Councillors authorised the following payments:

£96.00 Gardens of Avalon – Grass cutting for August.

£95.00 Pestwright – catching five moles in the Playing Field.

3761 – Other Business - matters of information only: Jayne Cox reported that the school bus had become stuck at the junction by the Old Post Office as a result of the cars parked there. Anne Page noted that there was a family wedding which may have resulted in more cars than usual being parked there. It was decided to include car parking on the next month’s Agenda.

The Clerk read a letter of introduction from the new PCSO Callum Davis, who had hoped to attend the meeting.

3762 – Dates of Parish Council Meetings: It was noted that the dates of the District Council Planning Board Meetings had been changed to the 3rd Wednesday of the month up to April 2015 and so there would be no advantage in changing the dates of the Parish Council meetings to allow the District and County Councillors to attend.

3763 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 1st October 2014 at 8.00pm in the Old School, Batcombe.

Chris Wildridge
1st October 2014