

# 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 3<sup>rd</sup> December 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.

**3801 – Apologies for Absence:** David Stevens – District Councillor.

**3802 – Declarations of Interest:** Liz Hollis declared an interest in item 3807 as the owner of the allotments field.

**3803 – Public Participation:** None.

**3804 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> November 2014** were approved and signed by the Chairman.

**3805 – Matters Arising:** None.

**3806 – District and County Councillors’ Reports:** The District Councillor had e-mailed to state that he had nothing to report.

**3807 – Allotments:** Jo Addison raised a concern that some allotments were not being used while other allotment holders wanted additional allotments. The Chairman had produced a summary of the meeting he and the Clerk had attended with three of the allotment holders on November 12<sup>th</sup>, which had been distributed with the Agendas. The points raised in the summary were discussed and was agreed that the definition of a tenant in clause 10 of the Allotment Holders Agreement should be extended to a ‘household’; that two meetings a year should be held with the allotment holders to discuss any issues, one at the allotments in May and one in October; that any allotment holders not cultivating their allotment would be required to keep weeds under control and if failing to do so would be given a month’s notice to act after which they would forfeit their allotment in accordance with the terms of the current Allotment Holders Agreement; and that a plan of the allotments would be added to the Parish Council website.

As the hedges of the allotments field had not been trimmed for some time it was agreed to pay for this out of the allotment funds held by the Parish Council. The Clerk was asked to obtain two quotes for the work and was delegated the power to authorise the work done before the next meeting. The Clerk reported that all the allotment rents had now been paid.

**3808 – Footpaths and Highways:** Somerset Highways had informed the Parish Council that their salting lorries were having trouble passing parked cars in Batcombe and asked that the Parish Council highlight the issue in the parish magazine. The Clerk was asked to find out from Somerset Highways where the particular problems were. It was noted that if the salting lorries were having problems then emergency vehicles would also find it difficult to get

through Batcombe. It was also noted that the school bus was having problems passing parked cars at the Old Post Office.

As reported at the last meeting the road from Stoney Stratton to Westcombe would be resurfaced from December 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> when the road would be closed during the day. Justin Witcombe was thanked for collecting 10 bags of de-icing materials from Somerset Highways plus 5 broken bags. These were being stored at Portway Farm.

### **Proposed Public Path Diversion Order - Restricted Byway SM 2/1**

There were two proposed diversions to the restricted byway. The first was to adjust the path of the byway from where it started on the Alham road (just before Higher Alham) so that it followed an existing track towards Lodge Farm. The second diversion would move the byway away from Lodge Farm to the north-west and join the unclassified road that led to Lodge Farm near the junction with the road past Batcombe Lodge. The reason given for this diversion was the closeness of the byway to a private residence. The Chairman had informed the Parish Council of this proposed diversion at its meeting in November 2013. The Council had no objections to the proposed diversion but a question was raised as to whether this would create a precedent that would be used to support other path diversions that the Council had objected to. After careful discussion it was agreed that each proposal should be considered on its own merits.

**3809 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report:** The Clerk reported that there were fourteen fresh molehills in the Playing Field. Ian Sage was thanked for replacing the barrier in the gap in the Playing Field fence that had been crushed. The Clerk reported that the other barrier had been regularly removed. Ian had obtained two quotes for new chain link fencing to go along the bottom of the Playing Field where the fence needed replacing. It was agreed to obtain the fencing from Read Agriservices which had provided the lower quote. It was suggested that a Parish Council working party could put up the new fencing in February. Following discussion it was agreed to leave the existing fence on the outside of the concrete posts and add the new fencing to the inside of the posts. The gap in the bottom corner of the Playing Field would be closed off at the same time but the gap behind the goal would be left with a more permanent low barrier. Iona FitzGerald volunteered to talk to the owner of the neighbouring field about replacing the fence and also to ask him to quote for catching the mole.

The Clerk reported that Gardens of Avalon had quoted the same price for cutting the grass in the Playing Field and around the Batcombe telephone box for the next year as the current year, and it was agreed to accept this price without seeking alternative quotes.

**3810 – Planning Applications:** There were no applications to consider.

**Planning Application Updates:** The Clerk reported that Mr David Willis was appealing against the decision to refuse permission to convert the stables at Crows Hill to a single dwelling and the Parish Council had until December 31<sup>st</sup> to make a representation to the Planning Inspector. It was agreed that the Clerk should write to the Inspector restating the Council's objections to the proposal.

The Clerk also reported that he had received an e-mail from the District Council's Tree Officer, in response to the Parish Council's concerns at not being consulted over the felling of trees in the Conservation Area, stating that he would make the necessary arrangements with the District Council's planning technical team to ensure that the Parish Council was consulted on such proposals in future.

Ian Sage reported that he had received a number of comments about the extension at Churchbridge Lodge and asked if there had been a response from the District Council to the

fact that a decision had been made before the Parish Council had considered the application for the extensions. The Chairman reported that he had had a meeting with the District Council's Planning Team Manager, Matthew Williams, where he had received a full apology for a mistake that was acknowledged to have been made by the District Council. The case officer had agreed an extension of the consultation period with the Clerk but had not made a note of this on the case file and as a result had made a decision before the Parish Council's meeting. The Chairman had accepted Mr William's apology without reservation and apologised to the meeting for not having reported this earlier.

**3811 – Coney Wood:** Around 40 local residents had attended the parish meeting on Saturday November 8<sup>th</sup> to consider the proposal that the Parish Council lease Coney Wood from the Woodland Trust. After hearing about the history of the Wood from Oliver Moberly; about why the Woodland Trust wished to lease it from Justin Milward of the Trust; about what the Parish Council could do with the Wood from Iona FitzGerald; and the financial risks involved from the Parish Council Chairman, all those present at the meeting indicated their support for the proposal, and many signed up to offer their help.

The final decision on the lease remained with the Parish Council, and the Clerk had drawn up a risk assessment that had been distributed with the Agendas, to assist the Council in that decision. It was noted that the Parish Council needed to obtain more information from its insurers and from other bodies and to take legal advice on the lease before making a decision. It was felt that the risk assessment should provide values to the risks as a guide to the level of reserves that would need to be held. It was agreed that the first priority was to see a copy of the lease and the Chairman reported that the Woodland Trust were having one drawn up. The Chairman stated that he hoped the cost of the legal advice on the lease would be donated.

**3812 – Dogs:** The Clerk reported that he had spoken to the District Council's Dog Warden Service following the report of a dog in Kale Street chasing a cat into the cat owner's home and attacking it there. The District Council would be writing to the owners of the dog reminding them of their duty to keep their dogs under control. The Clerk noted that the Parish Council could make a Dog Control Order, under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005, requiring dogs to be kept on leads in public places, although this was not recommended except as a last resort, as the Parish Council would be responsible for enforcing the Control Order.

**3813 – Review of the Council's and Clerk's Membership of Other Bodies:** The Clerk noted that the Council was a member of the Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC) and through this also a member of the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). SALC was a valuable source of training for Councillors and the Clerk and also kept the Council abreast of the latest changes in Government legislation and the impact this would have on the Council. In addition the Clerk was a member of the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC). The Council paid for the Clerk's membership of SLCC, which was the case with the majority of the SLCC's members, and the SLCC is another valuable source of information and advice. Under Standing Orders the Council's and the Clerk's membership of other bodies should be reviewed annually. Continuing membership of both bodies was agreed.

**3814 – Budget and Precept 2015/16:** A budget for the coming year and a forecast for the next three years had been distributed with the Agendas. The District Council had extended the deadline for Parish Councils to provide the level of their precept for 2015/16 to the middle of January when the tax base for the parish would be known. It was therefore agreed to defer the setting of the budget and precept for 2015/16 to the January meeting. The Chairman proposed

that the budgeted rise in the precept be increased from £200 to £300 to begin building up funds for Coney Wood should the lease go ahead and this was agreed in principle.

**3815 - Authorisation of payment:** Councillors authorised the following payment:

£45.00 Gardens of Avalon – Grass cutting for November.

**3816 – Other Business - matters of information only:** It was noted that in the most recent parish magazine there was a reported proposal to add a name to the war memorials in Batcombe. The Chairman had contacted the proposer to state that any addition to the war memorials would need the permission of the Parish Council and would need careful research, planning and costing.

Justin Witcombe reported that, at the last meeting of the Village Hall Trust, Bruno Cristofoli had stood down as the Village Hall Chairman and the new Chairman was Griff Williams, with Judy Stober the new Secretary. Justin also noted that he hoped to repair the skittle boards belonging to the Village Hall Trust.

**3817 – Date and Time of Next Meeting:** Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2015 at 7.30pm in the Old School, Batcombe.

*Chris Wildridge*  
*7th January 2015*