

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 4th March 2015 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 two members of the public.

3857 – Apologies for Absence: David Stevens – District Councillor. Iona FitzGerald apologised for not having sent her apologies for the meeting on February 17th.

3858 – Declarations of Interest: Ian Sage declared an interest in item 3867 – as he was helping with the felling of the trees; and Liz Hollis declared an interest in item 3865 – the proposed Public Path Diversion Order at Lower Eastcombe Farm – as a neighbour.

3859 – Public Participation: None.

3860 – Minutes of the Meetings held on Wednesday 4th February and Tuesday 17th February 2015 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3861 – Matters Arising: None.

3862 – District and County Councillors' Reports: None.

3863 – Footpaths and Highways: Proposed Litter Pick – Justin Witcombe noted that there was a considerable amount of litter in the village, some of which was blowing from the recycling lorries. Justin and Tim Chater were willing to organise a litter pick with the help of the Batcombe Cricket Club as volunteers. They would liaise with the Waste Partnership so that the litter would be collected.

3864 – Emergency Plan: The Chairman had contacted volunteers to confirm that they were willing to assist and the Clerk had updated the information on the Emergency Plan, copies of which were distributed to Councillors. The Plan would be the focus of the Annual Parish Meeting to which Geoffrey Mackett from the Somerset Local Authorities Civil Contingency Partnership had been invited. The Chairman hoped that the Plan would be tested before that meeting and formally adopted at the next Parish Council meeting. He also hoped that much of the information would be published on the Parish Council website with the exception of the details of volunteers. It was noted that the Plan was intended to assist the Emergency Team rather than be available to everyone. The existence of the Plan and who to contact would be publicised at the Annual Parish Meeting and in the parish magazine.

3865 – Footpaths and Highways (continued):

Proposed Public Path Diversion Order. Footpath SM 2/7 (Lower Eastcombe Farm). The proposed diversion would take the footpath away from the private residence, along a more direct route that was already used by walkers. The Council agreed to support the proposed diversion as this was a better route for walkers and gave the residents a little more privacy.

Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2 – Jayne Cox reported that the Mendip Bridleways and Byways Association had met to consider the RoWIP2 and whether any footpaths could be upgraded to bridleways, but had not found any that were suitable as they were either too short or involved too many landowners. The Chairman encouraged them to develop support for the project.

NO HGV signs – The Clerk had contacted Rob Davey from the County Council’s Traffic Management department repeating the Parish Council’s request for a “No HGV” sign on the road past Batcombe Lodge at Brickhouse Farm. Mr Davey had restated his position that there was no need for additional HGV signage from the A361, noting that the junction the Parish Council were concerned about already had two large 7.5 ton weight limit signs. It was suggested that every incident of an HGV getting stuck in Batcombe should be reported to Mr Davey.

3866 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report: Ian Sage reported that the new fence had been ordered and should arrive in time for the work on Saturday March 21st. It was proposed to work for 3 or 4 hours on the Saturday and then finish the work on the Sunday if required. Bruno Cristofoli noted that he may have some fencing left from the last time part of the fence was renewed.

The Clerk reported that there were more molehills in the Playing Field and it was suggested these should be raked over whenever they appeared. He had also placed a new padlock on the new picnic table.

The Clerk had obtained two quotes for 50 70l bags of Playbark to be placed under the multi-play apparatus. The Council decided to go with the lower priced playbark from Oaktree Garden Products and Ian Sage volunteered to collect the playbark. The Clerk was asked to check if the playbark could be obtained in a ½ ton bag as this might be cheaper.

3867 – Planning Applications: Planning Application No: 2015/0296/TCA – 5 conifers – fell because of excessive shading and some roots causing damage to boundary wall next to public highway. Conifers are beginning to decline with age – brown/bare branches etc. Fir Tree Cottage, Batcombe – Works/Felling Trees in a CA. The Council agreed to recommend approval as there were no objections to the proposed felling of the conifers which were felt to be unattractive trees.

Planning Updates

The application for Listed Building Consent for 1 Sunnyside had been approved with conditions relating to the approval of materials. The Clerk reported that the case officer had expressed his thanks to the Parish Council for meeting again to discuss the proposal, and stated that the dotted lines on the plans showed the position of existing ceiling beams and had no connection to any proposed alteration.

Planning permission had been granted for the removal of the existing porch and construction of a new porch at Meadow View on Kale Street, and the Parish Council’s communication regarding the building work on the derelict cottage in Westcombe had been acknowledged.

3868 – Coney Wood: The Clerk reported receiving an e-mail from Justin Milward at the Woodland Trust stating that the Trust had approved the drawing up of a lease which was being done by their legal team. Concerns were raised over whether the disputed ownership of the small portion of the wood north of the road had been resolved. It was agreed that this should be raised when obtaining legal advice on the lease.

3869 – Review of Risk Management Policy: A copy of the Risk Assessment and Management document had been enclosed with the Agendas. It was unchanged from previous years but was required to be reviewed annually. The Clerk would produce a risk assessment for the erecting of the new fencing in the Playing Field. The Playing Field would be closed while work was taking place and the fencing left in a safe state when work was not being done.

3870 – Review of Insurance Cover: The Clerk reported that the insurance cover should be reviewed annually and that last year the Council had entered into a three-year binding agreement with Came & Co. for a premium marginally cheaper than the previous three-year agreement with them at £265 a year. The insurance cover includes Public Liability and Employers Liability of £10 million each and Fraud and Dishonesty Cover of £150,000. The Playing Field equipment, the notice board opposite Church Farm and the Westcombe Telephone Kiosk were also insured. The Clerk reported receiving e-mail confirmation that the new picnic table had been insured for £525.

3871 – Review of Schedule of Assets: The Schedule of Assets had been updated to include the new picnic table in the Playing Field and distributed with the Agenda. The Chairman suggested that the Parish Council should consider gifting the 1886 Ordnance Survey maps and the aerial photographs that were held in the Heritage Room to the Heritage Room. Ian Sage felt it would be better for the Parish Council to retain ownership.

3872 – Annual Parish Meeting: This would be held on Wednesday April 8th at 7.30pm in the Jubilee Hall. Iona FitzGerald gave her apologies. The light refreshments would be provided by Councillors.

3873 - Authorisation of payment: None.

3874 – Other Business - matters of information only: The Clerk reported that the vacant allotment was now occupied. The allotment holder had signed the tenancy agreement and paid the allotment rent for half a year.

The County Council had adopted the Somerset Minerals Plan: Development Plan document up to 2030. The hope was expressed that fracking could be kept out of Somerset.

The Clerk reported that Electoral Services had sent ten nomination packs for the Parish Council elections in May but that these had not yet arrived.

The Chairman reported that he had been contacted by a resident whose sheep had been chased by a dog. The resident had spoken to the owner of the dog, who seemed unconcerned that their dog was chasing sheep, and so he had reported the matter to the police.

Justin Witcombe reported that the Village Hall Trust would be holding their Big Draw on Friday April 24th when there would be a barn dance and a disco.

The Clerk reported that the Kimber Classic Trial would be taking place on Saturday 25th April when mainly pre-war MG cars would be passing through the village including Walter's Lane and the ford and Lower Alham.

3875 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 8th April 2015 at 6.45pm in the Jubilee Hall, Batcombe to be followed by the Annual Parish Meeting at 7.30pm.

Chris Wildridge
8th April 2015