

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 3rd June 2015 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 8.00pm.

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

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

3917– Apologies for Absence: None.

3918 – Declarations of Interest: None. Councillors returned their Register of Interests Declaration Forms to the Clerk to be forwarded to the Monitoring Officer.

3919 – Public Participation: David Willis noted that he had informed the Parish Council of his intention to apply for planning permission to convert the stables at Crows Hill into a workshop and asked the Parish Council to give its view on such an application before he submitted it. It was noted that unlike the District Council the Parish Council was not in a position to give pre-application advice and could not give its view on an application until it had seen the details of that application. Mr Willis asked if he could talk to individual Councillors about their views on his application, and it was noted that Councillors would need to consider the application with an open mind when it came before the Council.

Sam Pick thanked the Parish Council for its role in arranging the restoration of the milestone on Walter's Lane.

3920 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 13th May 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3921 – Matters Arising: Insurance – Confirmation had been received that the insurance premium had been paid and the Council was insured for the year from June 1st 2015.

Coney Wood – Ian Sage reported that a local land agent would give an opinion on the lease for £100 and would draw up an alternative agreement for £400. The Chairman reported that Justin Milward of the Woodland Trust had been informed of the Council's concerns regarding the lease. Justin Milward had responded that most of the items were standard clauses that had been accepted by Parish Councils and community groups around the country and that it might be possible to rewrite the clause regarding the water feature. Advice would be taken from SALC as to whether advice on the lease from a land agent would be sufficient and the Chairman would ask Justin Milward for details of other Parish Councils that had taken a lease from the Woodland Trust.

VAT – The Clerk reported that the reclaimed VAT had been received.

3922 – Footpaths and Highways: As requested at the previous meeting, a map of the rights of way in the Parish was distributed to Councillors with the Agendas. The Clerk reported that the pruning of the trees opposite Church Farm had been added to Somerset Highways' list of works pending, but that as they did not currently have other works in this area it might be some time before the work was undertaken.

3923 – Allotments: The Clerk reported that the new allotment holder had signed a tenancy agreement and paid the agreed rent of £15 for the remainder of the current year. The Chairman proposed a meeting with allotment holders on the morning of Saturday June 13th to discuss any issues regarding the allotments. The Clerk to inform the allotment holders.

3924 – Playground – Maintenance Report: The Clerk reported that the annual inspection of the Playing Field by RoSPA would take place in June. The proposed rolling of the Playing Field had been cancelled but would take place at a later date. Iona FitzGerald noted that children got wet feet when using the drinking fountain as there was no drain attached to the fountain. Justin Witcombe volunteered to attach some flexible hose to take waste water from the fountain outside the bus shelter.

3925 – Planning Applications: There were no planning applications to consider.

3926 – Planning Application Updates: The matters reserved by conditions for the Listed Building Consent at 2 Sunnyside and the planning permission for Giles Cottages had been approved.

The Clerk reported that an appeal had been made against the decision to refuse planning permission for the replacement dwelling at Valley View Farm. The Parish Council had until July 6th to make a representation to the Planning Inspectorate if it wished to withdraw or modify its response to the original application. It was agreed to write to the Planning Inspectorate asking for a copy of the appeal decision and stating the Parish Council's support for the District Council's decision and that its views were unchanged.

3927 – Emergency Plan: The Chairman had distributed to Councillors a copy of the plan to implement the Emergency Plan that had been prepared by Robert Jones and presented at the Annual Parish Meeting. This plan included the use of the Old School as an emergency control room and the Clerk suggested that the Emergency Management Team should look at the details of these proposals, noting the poor mobile telephone reception at the Old School. The Chairman had spoken to the Village Hall Trust Chairman about the proposals, and had contacted Geoffrey Mackett from the Civil Contingencies Unit with regard to possible grants for generators that would provide power to the Jubilee Hall and Old School during a power cut and also with regard to grants for training. It was also suggested that Geoffrey Mackett be asked about the road closed signs that could be stored locally and used to close Portway and Crows Hills in icy weather, which he had spoken about at the Annual Parish Meeting.

3928 – Draft Plan for the Next Four Years: The Chairman had proposed that the Parish Council take a longer term perspective and plan for the next four years. He had suggested that the Parish Council look at matters such as the lease of Coney Wood, the Emergency Plan, more affordable housing and improved broadband. Other items suggested were the repair of the War Memorial wall, replacement or repair of the notice boards, maintenance of verges and drains and encouraging more trees to be left in hedgerows and in fields.

The Clerk advised the Council to be wary of taking on too many initiatives at one time given the limited hours available from the Clerk. The Chairman stated that he would like the Council to budget in line with a plan for the next four years.

3929 – Staffing Committee: The Clerk had suggested that the arrangements for the Clerk's annual review be made at this meeting rather than call a separate meeting of the Staffing Committee, noting the recommendation from SALC that the review should be undertaken by two Councillors. The Chairman stated that he would like the Staffing Committee to review

the Clerk's Contract of Employment. It was agreed to explore the issues raised at the next meeting.

3930 – Review of Financial Regulations: Standing Orders require that the Parish Council's Financial Regulations are reviewed annually. It was agreed that no changes were needed to the Financial Regulations which had been adopted the previous June or to the various figures in the Regulation that were set by the Parish Council. John Sommer was appointed as the Councillor to verify the quarterly bank reconciliations.

3931 – Review of the Effectiveness of the System of Internal Control: The Clerk reported his belief that the Council's system of internal control was more than sufficient for a small Parish Council. The details were given in the Financial Regulations and included the budgetary process, the authorisation of all payments by the Council, the signing of cheques at Council meetings by two Councillors, who have to initial the cheque stubs and invoices, the quarterly bank reconciliations and the internal audit undertaken by Griff Williams, who was both competent and independent of the Council. It was noted that the previous year the internal auditor had indicated that one area in which internal controls could be improved was in the receipt of large sums of cash as had happened during the fundraising for the new play equipment and it had been agreed that any cash should be counted in the presence of the person presenting the cash to the Clerk and a signed receipt obtained.

3932 – Annual Return for the Year Ended 31st March 2015: Copies of Section 1 of the Annual Return - the Statement of Accounts – had been enclosed with the Agendas, together with a copy of the Financial Statements, considered at the previous meeting, showing how the figures in the Statement of Accounts had been derived. Copies of the Internal Auditor's Report completed by Mr Griff Williams were distributed to Councillors. Approval of the Statement of Accounts was agreed and this was signed by the Chairman. It was noted that the large variations in boxes 3 (Total other receipts) and boxes 6 (All other payments) were due to the fundraising for and VAT reclaimed on the new play equipment in the previous year and the cost of that equipment.

Copies of Section 2 of the Annual Return - the Annual Governance Statement – had also been enclosed with the Agendas. Approval of the Annual Governance Statement was agreed and the Statement was signed by the Chairman and the Clerk.

The Clerk reported that the Internal Auditor had no recommendations to make to the Council, but noted that under the new Transparency Code for Small Authorities signed copies of the Statement of Accounts, the Annual Governance Statement and the Internal Auditor's Report would have to be published on the Parish Council's website.

3933 – Annual Grants from the Parish Council: It was agreed to provide the budgeted grants of £300 to the Village Hall (£100 for our own meetings, £150 for committee meetings of other village organisations and £50 to help with maintenance costs) and £200 to the Parochial Church Council for the maintenance of the churchyard. It was also agreed to give two grants of £100 (as budgeted) to Mendip Community Transport under the section 137 power, and to the Mendip Citizen's Advice Bureau.

3934 - Authorisation of payment: Councillors authorised the following payments:

£96.00	Gardens of Avalon – Grass cutting for May.
£15.00	Mr Shaun Froud – Reimbursement of allotment rent.
£15.00	Somerset Playing Fields Association – Subscription.

3935 - Other Business - Matters of Information: Justin Witcombe noted that a dangerous tree at The Three Horseshoes was being dealt with as an urgent matter without the usual consultation. The Chairman requested an item on the next Agenda to discuss the proposed enforced sale of housing association properties to tenants and to consider writing to our MP and District and County Councillors on the issue. The Clerk tabled copies of the Avon & Somerset Police and Crime Plan 2015-17.

3936 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 1st July 2015 at 8.00pm in the Old School, Batcombe.

Chris Wildridge

1st July 2015