

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 1st July 2015 in the Jubilee Hall, Batcombe, commencing at 8.00pm.

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

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage, Dick Skidmore – District Councillor and sixteen members of the public.

3937– Apologies for Absence: Justin Witcombe who was working.

3938 – Declarations of Interest: Ian Sage and Jayne Cox declared an interest in item 3951 as relatives of the Clerk.

3939 – Public Participation: None.

3940 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 3rd June 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3941 – Matters Arising: Grants – The Clerk noted that thanks for the grants provided by the Parish Council had been received from the Village Hall Trust, the Parochial Church Council, Mendip Citizens' Advice Bureau and Mendip Community Transport.

3942 – Planning Appeal: Planning Application No: 2014/2127/FUL – Demolition of existing dwelling and outbuildings (one retained) and replacement dwelling with conversion of traditional barn into cottage. Valley View Farm, Batcombe.

This appeal had been considered under planning application updates at the last meeting when it was decided not to modify the Parish Council's response to the application, but 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 to refuse permission. Following that meeting it was felt that an opportunity should be made for the Council to reconsider its response in the light of the views of members of the public and any new information that may be relevant. A written motion asking the Council to reconsider the matter had been presented by the Chairman and Vice Chairman. This was moved by the Vice Chairman, seconded by the Chairman and accepted by the Parish Council.

The Clerk read out the Parish Council's original response to the planning application for the benefit of the members of the public present. The Parish Council's view was that as the new dwelling was outside the curtilage of the existing dwelling it could not be considered a replacement dwelling and so must be considered as a new dwelling in open countryside, which is contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework except under special circumstances. Five members of the public then commented on aspects of the appeal, expressing concerns about the proposed replacement dwelling.

The Parish Council decided to reaffirm its original response with the addition of two comments resulting from the discussion of the appeal. The first being that one of the appeal documents had made the strong suggestion that one of the farm buildings near the site of the proposed new dwelling had at one time been a farmhouse. The Parish Council noted that

before the existing dwelling was built at Valley View Farm, the land and buildings were part of Boxbush Farm, whose farmhouse was located in the centre of the village. The second was that while the appellant was seeking to justify the size and prominent position of the proposed dwelling by stating that it “had been inspired by the numerous manor houses and large mansions in landscaped parks within the local area and district such as Southill House, Batcombe House and Spargrove” it was noted that, as was characteristic of the area, Batcombe House and Spargrove were located within the valleys that contained their respective settlements and that Southill House was a considerable distance from Batcombe.

3943 – District and County Councillors’ Reports: None.

3944 – Footpaths and Highways: The trees opposite Church Farm had been pruned by Somerset Highways’ contractor Arborista. The owner of Church Farm had complained that one of the trees needed more pruning. The Clerk was asked to advise the owner to contact Somerset Highways directly if he was still concerned about the trees.

Jayne Cox noted that a house rider had had an accident on Fry’s Lane by Longleat Cottage as a result of an overgrown bush making it difficult to pass the cottage. Jayne had cut back the bush and the Chairman asked that his condolences be passed onto the person concerned.

3945 – Allotments: The Chairman’s report on his meeting with the allotment holders had been distributed with the Agendas. As a result of this meeting it had been suggested that the allotments tenancy agreement be amended to require allotment holders to remove any temporary structures they may have erected when they give up their allotment. It was agreed to consider this amendment to the tenancy agreement at the September meeting of the Council. The Clerk noted that any amendment would only apply to future tenancy agreements.

3946 – Playground – Maintenance Report: The Clerk reported that the annual inspection of the Playing Field by RoSPA would have taken place in June but the report had not yet been received. The mole had been very active. The Chairman to contact Justin Witcombe to see if the Playing Field would be rolled within the next fortnight – if not it was agreed to use the services of the molecatcher. Lucinda Edgell volunteered to undertake the weekly inspection of the Playing Field while the Clerk was away in the second week of both July and August.

A strand of barbed wire had been placed across the gap in the Playing Field fence at head height for a small child. There were cattle in the field next to the Playing Field and the barbed wire was presumed to have been placed there to prevent them getting into the Playing Field. As a temporary measure the Clerk had wrapped the barbs in tape to prevent any injuries. Ian Sage volunteered to replace the barbed wire with a more suitable barrier to cattle. The Chairman volunteered to speak to the landowner.

A report had been received that a year previously a small child had been injured in the Playing Field when the concrete post that was being used as the stumps in the cricket net fell over. The child’s mother had been concerned to find that this post was still being used in the cricket net although “someone from the Parish Council” was aware of the accident. The concrete post was removed immediately. It was noted that if anyone was aware of an accident having occurred in the Playing Field it should be reported to the Clerk immediately. It was agreed to talk to the Cricket Club about purchasing a set of stumps for the cricket net to avoid unsuitable items being used.

The Annual Fete. On behalf of the PCC Rob Jones had requested the use of the Playing Field for the annual village fete on the August Bank Holiday Monday on broadly the same basis as last year, when the Parish Council agreed to close the Playing Field from 8.00pm on the Saturday evening and on the Sunday and the Tuesday morning to allow the preparation and

clearing up after the fete to be done safely. In addition the PCC had asked for permission to hold a Songs of Praise service in the Playing Field on the Sunday evening. Both requests were agreed. The PCC had also requested that the Playing Field grass and hedge inside the Playing Field were cut back prior to the Fete. This would be undertaken by Geoff Sparkes of Gardens of Avalon. During the Fete weekend the zip wire would be immobilised with a padlock and chain and an inspection of the Playing Field by the Clerk and Rob Jones on the Tuesday afternoon would ensure the Playing Field had been left in a safe condition for children to use.

3947 – Planning Applications: There were no planning applications to consider.

Planning Application Updates: The application for alterations and glazing of the first floor opening in the existing stone gable wall at The Old Forge, Westcombe as amended by revised plans received on 7th May 2015 had been approved by the District Council. The Parish Council had recommended refusal of the original proposal which was for a frameless window extending to the top of the gable wall. In the revised plans the window was inserted in the existing opening meeting the Parish Council’s concerns.

A non material amendment for the raising of a small dormer to facilitate the insertion of a new staircase with the provision of high level windows and two roof lights above the staircase on planning assent 2015/0124/HSE at Lower Eastcombe Farm had been approved by the District Council. The Clerk noted that the Parish Council was not consulted over non material amendments.

3948 – Affordable Housing: The Chairman expressed concern at the Government’s proposal to extend the Right to Acquire scheme to allow tenants to buy their Housing Association homes at a discount and the impact this will have on the provision of affordable housing in the parish. It was agreed that the Clerk should write to our District and County Councillors and to our MP outlining the Council’s concerns on this issue.

Councillors were informed of a possible proposal for affordable housing within the parish and it was noted that a Housing Needs Survey would be required to establish whether there was any demand for affordable housing. This would be discussed at the September meeting and the Chairman indicated that a Working Party might be formed to take the matter forward.

3949 – Coney Wood: The Woodland Trust had been informed of the Parish Council’s concerns with lease, and had responded that this was a standard lease that had been accepted by other Parish Councils and community groups. Justin Milward from the Woodland Trust would be willing to talk through the lease with the Parish Council, and had indicated that the Woodland Trust would be willing to consider an amended wording of the clause regarding the pond, which was a particular concern.

It was agreed to engage a local land agent who was prepared to give advice on the lease of the Wood for a charge of £100 before proceeding any further. The Clerk to write to the land agent.

3950 – Staffing Committee: Clerk’s Contract of Employment - it was agreed that, rather than call a meeting of the Staffing Committee, a Working Party should be established to review the Clerk’s Contract of Employment.

Clerk’s Annual Appraisal – it was agreed that the annual appraisal would be undertaken by the Chairman and Lucinda Edgell.

3951 - Authorisation of payment: Councillors authorised the following payments:

£96.00 Gardens of Avalon – Grass cutting for June.

£20.00 SALC – Training for a New Councillor.
£957.96 The Clerk – Salary for 1st Quarter.
£95.98 The Clerk – Expenses for 1st Quarter.

3952 - Other Business - Matters of Information: The Clerk noted that Lucinda Edgell had been booked into a training session for new Councillors that would take place at Wanstrow Village Hall on July 9th.

3953 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 5th August 2015 at 8.00pm in the Old School, Batcombe if required to consider planning applications; otherwise Wednesday 2nd September 2015 at 8.00pm in the Old School, Batcombe.

Chris Wildridge
2nd September 2015