

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 6th January 2016 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 7.30pm.

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

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage.

4021 – Apologies for Absence: Nigel Woolcombe-Adams – County Councillor.

4022 – Declarations of Interest: Ian Sage and Jayne Cox declared an interest in item 4034 – authorisation of the payment of the Clerk’s salary and expenses - as relatives of the Clerk.

4023 – Public Participation: None.

4024 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 2nd December 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4025 – Matters Arising: War Memorial Wall – Ian Sage reported that the local branch of the Royal British Legion were able to provide a grant for this work and were proposing undertaking a fundraising event.

4026 – District and County Councillors’ Reports: None.

4027 – Allotments: The Clerk reported that one of the existing allotment holders had expressed an interest in the vacant allotment. The Clerk to confirm that the allotment was not wanted by someone who had expressed an interest previously and if not to rent it to the existing allotment holder.

The Clerk noted that three allotment holders had confirmed they would be attending the meeting to address the field owner’s concerns. The Chairman reported that the field owner would be unable to attend the meeting but he would request a statement of her concerns.

4028 – Footpaths and Highways: The Chairman expressed concern that the Highways sign on the A359 junction was in feet and not in metres. It was noted that the sign placed on the junction by the Parish Council was very dirty and Justin Witcombe volunteered to clean it. Justin stated that Mendip Signs could provide a reflective strip to be attached to the bottom of the sign at a cost of £25 and it was agreed to add this to the sign.

The Clerk reported that a resident of Mill Lane complained that no grit had been left on Mill Lane when placed elsewhere in Batcombe. The Clerk had contacted Somerset Highways who would be placing some grit on Mill Lane. The same resident would also like a bollard placed at the bottom of Mill Lane to stop cars from driving onto the grass and getting stuck, but Somerset Highways currently have no funds for anything but safety works.

An HGV attempting a delivery to the brewery at Westcombe in December had driven down the road past Batcombe Lodge and had got stuck on Back Lane at the junction with the road past The Three Horseshoes. It had had to stay there overnight and the police came and put out road blocked signs. The Clerk stated that County Council had reported that the direction signs

to the brewery had been delayed as they were waiting to see if the cheese factory would share in the costs.

Jayne Cox reported that the bridleway at Honeycliff had stood up well during the recent bad weather but noted that a lot of the road drains were blocked, such as the one below Walter's Lane. Justin Witcombe volunteered to look at the drains. The Clerk was asked to remind Somerset Highways of the need to clear the drains and cut back the verges.

4029 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report: Grass cutting had finished for the year but given the continuing mild weather Gardens of Avalon would be prepared to do an extra cut if required.

The basket had been removed from the basket swing. Ian Sage suggested that the toddler swing be returned to the frame used by the basket swing and two junior swings be placed in the other frame as was the case prior to the latest improvements. A new frame for the basket swing could then be placed on a different site. This was agreed.

Iona FitzGerald had contacted the County Councillor about Health and Well-being grants and it was suggested that grants be applied for the new noticeboards as this would fit the criteria of combating isolation. Consideration of the quote for the repair of the zip wire was deferred to the item on the budget for 2016/17 [below].

4030 – Planning Applications: Planning Application No: 2015/3075/TCA - Proposed pruning of two trees in a Conservation Area. T1 Lime – 60% pollard to address storm damage; T2 Poplar – remove deadwood; The Parsonage, Gold Hill, Batcombe – Works/Felling Trees in a Conservation Area. The Parish Council decided to recommend refusal as the pollarding of the Lime tree was felt to be excessive. For a significant tree in a prominent location, a reduction rather than pollarding was felt to be more appropriate.

Planning Application Updates: There was nothing to report.

4031 – Emergency Plan: A proposal by the Chairman that Robert Jones be added to the membership of the Emergency Plan Working Party was agreed. The existing members were the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman, the Clerk and Arish Turle representing the PCC. The Chairman to approach Rob Jones. It was agreed that the Working Party should meet after Rob Jones and Arish Turle had undertaken a paper exercise on the Plan.

4032 – Annual Parish Meeting: The Annual Parish Meeting would take place on Wednesday 6th April at 7.30pm in the Jubilee Hall. Councillors were asked to consider possible topics for discussion, to be agreed at the next meeting.

4033 – Budget and Precept 2016/17: The District Council had stated that Batcombe's tax base for 2016/17 would be 201.19 compared to 206.09 for 2015/16. The Clerk noted that the smaller the tax base the more Council Tax each household would have to pay to provide the same precept for the Parish Council, and that if, as proposed at the last meeting, the Council increased its precept by £500 to £8,450 (an increase of 6.3% in the precept), the component of Council Tax resulting from the precept would increase by 8.9%.

An amended budget and forecast showing the increases in precept of £500 each year proposed at the previous meeting had been distributed with the Agendas. This would result in a deficit of £500 in 2016/17, but then there would be surpluses of over £1,000 in each of the following years.

The Chairman used a spreadsheet he had produced and projected onto a screen to show the impact on the budget of including or removing various items. After some discussion it was agreed to set the precept at the level proposed at the previous meeting of £8,450.

The Chairman proposed that next year a Budget Working Party headed by the Vice Chairman should produce a budget. However, it was felt that the budget should be discussed and agreed by the full Council.

The quotation from Vita Play for the repair of the zip wire was agreed.

The Clerk reported that the £600 estimate for the repair of the war memorial wall was for repointing the wall, replacing some of the stone and rebuilding “a few patches that are not so good”. Ian Sage felt that more extensive work rebuilding the wall would be required and volunteered to speak to the stonemason to check that the estimate was realistic.

The Clerk had obtained an estimate for the repair of the Westcombe notice board. It was proposed that the Council consider replacing this notice board with a new one – to be considered at the next meeting.

4034 - Authorisation of payment: Councillors authorised the following payments:

£957.96 The Clerk – Salary for 3rd Quarter.

£115.23 The Clerk – Expenses for 3rd Quarter.

4035 - Other Business - Matters of Information: The Vice-Chairman reported that Nick Sommer had contacted the District Council with regard to the proposed litter pick and the additional risk assessments and insurance requirements needed to organise a litter pick on the highway meant that it was unlikely to be undertaken.

4036 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 3rd February 2016 at 7.30pm in the Old School, Batcombe.

Chris Wildridge
3rd February 2016