

# BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

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## Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2016 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 7.30pm.

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

**Also Present:** The Clerk – Rob Sage, Nigel Woollcombe-Adams – County Councillor, and two members of the public.

**4037 – Apologies for Absence:** Lucinda Edgell.

**4038 – Declarations of Interest:** John Sommer declared an interest in item 4049 – Housing Needs Survey, and Iona FitzGerald declared a pecuniary interest in item 4043 – planning application for tree works at The Forge.

**4039 – Public Participation:** None.

**4040 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> January 2016** were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**4041 – Matters Arising:** Health and Well-being Grant – Iona FitzGerald reported that the application for a grant for a new notice board had been made to the County Councillor. Budget and Precept for 2016/17 – The Clerk reported that the Parish Council's Council Tax Support Grant would be £71.80 for 2016/17, an increase of 52p on the current year's grant. He also reported that the District Council have been informed of the precept of £8,450 for 2016/17 agreed at the last meeting.

**4042 – District and County Councillors' Reports:** The County Councillor reported on a proposal to devolve powers over items such as highways and strategic planning to a regional group of Councils consisting of Devon and Somerset County Councils, Plymouth and Torbay and all the District Councils in Somerset and Devon. He noted that the Government required an elected mayor for powers to be devolved which may lead to the proposal being deferred.

By 2020 the Government would be removing rate support grants for councils and local authorities would have to become self-sufficient by keeping business rates and working with other partners. Mendip DC was looking at becoming a housing authority. The Government was allowing County Councils to put 2% on the Council Tax to spend on adult social care. The precept for the Somerset Rivers Authority would add a further 1.25%.

The County Councillor also reported that GCSE results were above average and the Children's Social Care department had a full complement of senior staff. The service was seen to be improving. Hinkley Point did not seem to be progressing. In response to a question from Iona FitzGerald, the County Councillor noted that there were plans to recycle hard plastics, with green bins being collected every three weeks. The County Councillor then left the meeting.

**4043 – Planning Applications:** It was agreed to bring the planning applications forward on the Agenda.

Planning Application No: 2016/01295/TCA - Proposed works to T1 and T3 Prunus sp – crown reduce by 1-2m and shape; T2, T4 and G1 all Prunus sp – fell; The Forge, Chapel Row, Batcombe – Works/Felling Trees in a Conservation Area. The applicant noted that the application was to thin out six plum trees to allow more light and views. Iona FitzGerald left the room for this item. The Parish Council decided to recommend approval as there were no objections to the proposed tree works and Iona FitzGerald re-joined the meeting.

Planning Application No: 2016/0074/VRC – Variation of condition 3 of planning permission 2011/0075 to allow the development to be constructed to Level 4 in the Code for Sustainable Homes. Carrot Hill Farmhouse, Spargrove Lane, Batcombe – Variation or Removal of Conditions. Condition 3 of the planning permission required the development to “be constructed to the approved Level 5 Code for Sustainable Homes and shall not be occupied until the final certificate confirming compliance with the approved Level 5 Code for Sustainable Homes has been issued”. As no explanation had been given for the failure to meet the condition, and as the sustainability of the building had been a key factor in the original application, the Parish Council felt that the development should meet the level of sustainability required in the original planning permission and so recommended refusal of permission.

**4044 – Allotments:** The Clerk reported that the vacant allotment had been let to one of the existing allotment holders as no other interest had been shown in it. He had been charged £30 instead of the full £35 for the remaining ten months of the year.

The Chairman reported on the meeting with allotment holders. It was agreed that allotment holders should be responsible for the care of the common grassed area and the hedge adjacent to their allotment. The Parish Council would cut back the overhanging hedge and the field owner has agreed to a bonfire to burn the branches cut back. The Parish Council would also arrange removal of items left by previous allotment holders including a large refuse bin, notice board and large plastic bin lids. It was agreed to ask the contractor who had previously cut the hedges in the allotments field to cut back the overhanging hedge, organise a bonfire and sort the rubbish dump in the corner of the field. Disposal of the remaining rubbish to be arranged with the Waste Partnership.

**4045 – Footpaths and Highways:** Justin Witcombe was thanked for cleaning the HGV warning sign on the A359 junction. He noted that on inspection of the sign the reflective strip considered at the previous meeting was not appropriate.

The production of the HGV direction signs to the Wild Beer brewery had been delayed as the County Council had not received confirmation on whether the cheese factory wished to be included on the signs. The Chairman had spoken to the cheese factory and hopefully production of the signs would be sorted. The Chairman also reported that he was having an informal meeting with the Chairmen of Evercreech and Cranmore Parish Councils to consider options for additional HGV signs.

Justin Witcombe reported a large pothole in Kale Street.

**4046 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report:** The Clerk reported that Vita Play would be doing the repair of the zip wire in February while they were undertaking a larger project in Frome.

The mole continued to be active in the Playing Field which was very wet from all the recent rain. Justin Witcombe reported that he was still working on the mole repellents. Iona FitzGerald would undertake the pruning of the willow structures.

**4047 – Planning Application Updates:** The Clerk reported that he had been contacted by the person renting the Glebe Field, who had asked the owners, the Diocese of Bath & Wells, to make safe a Horse Chestnut tree whose branches were dangerous and had been told that the Parish Council had delayed the application to do this. The Clerk had replied noting that the application that had come before the Council had not mentioned a Horse Chestnut or any dangerous branches. (The Council had recommended refusal as it felt the proposed pollarding of the Lime tree in the field was unnecessarily severe.)

**4048 – Premises Licence – Gilcombe Farm:** The Clerk reported that the Licensing Officer at South Somerset District Council had informed him of a premises licence application for a music event at Gilcombe Farm over the weekend of May 27<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup>. As this was the day before the deadline, the Clerk had responded, as in previous cases, with a request that the same conditions as had been applied to the Sunrise Festival and Farmfest be applied to any music festival at Gilcombe Farm. The Senior Environmental Officer at South Somerset had requested similar conditions and the organisers had been happy to agree to this. As a result the Clerk had withdrawn the representation. The Parish Council confirmed the instructions for the Clerk when the Council is informed of licence applications with no time to consider them at a meeting.

**4049 – Affordable Housing:** The Clerk reported that the Parish Council has been awarded a grant covering the full cost of the Housing Needs Survey. It was agreed to proceed with the survey. The Clerk to contact the Community Council for Somerset.

**4050 – Annual Parish Meeting:** The Chairman requested that the date of the Annual Parish Meeting be changed to Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> April as he would be unable to make the original date and this was agreed. It was also agreed that the discussion topic for the Annual Parish Meeting should be the Housing Needs Survey and that Jane Birch from the Community Council for Somerset should be asked to speak at the meeting.

**4051 – The Queen’s 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday:** It was noted that the Parochial Church Council were planning to celebrate the Queen’s Official Birthday on the weekend of June 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> with a silver band concert in the church on the Saturday and a church service on the Sunday to be followed by a street party by the Three Horseshoes and a tree planting.

The National Association of Local Councils was encouraging Parish and Town Councils to take part in a national lighting of beacons on the Queen’s actual birthday (April 21<sup>st</sup>). The owners of Burnell would be asked if they were prepared to allow a beacon to be lit there.

**4052 – Bank Reconciliation and Budget Update:** The Vice Chairman confirmed that he had verified the bank reconciliation for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter that had been prepared by the Clerk.

A statement of receipts and payments comparing the budget for the current year with a projection based on receipts and payment to date had been distributed with the Agendas. The expected variations against budget were unchanged from the last budget update, apart from the cost of the Scribe 2000 Accounts (£145 + VAT) which had not been budgeted for. As a result there was a projected deficit of £85 on the year, instead of the surplus of £120 predicted at the last budget update. This left the Council with projected funds of £5,120 at the end of the year, of which approximately £950 would be earmarked for the allotments.

**4053 – Administration:** It was agreed to amend Standing Orders to allow the electronic distribution of the Minutes and Agendas. It was noted that any Councillor wishing to receive

the Agenda and Minutes electronically would need to sign a written declaration stating that they were happy for this to happen.

The Chairman had been informed by SALC that the Parish Council had been awarded a grant of £249.98 for the purchase of a laptop computer for the Clerk. It was agreed to allow the Clerk up to £300 to purchase a suitable laptop. Justin Witcombe suggested a local resident with IT experience who might be willing to provide advice. It was noted that internet security software would be required and the Chairman suggested the Council purchase Microsoft Office Home and Business 2016 and hoped to have the new equipment by the next meeting.

**4054 – Notice Boards:** As noted at the previous meeting the Parish Council had received an estimate of the cost of repairing the Westcombe notice board that would be within £200. In light of the application to the County Councillor's Health and Well-being budget for a grant of £395 for a new notice board, a decision on whether to repair the existing board or purchase a new one was deferred to the next meeting when the outcome of the application should be known.

**4055 - Authorisation of payment:** Councillors authorised the following payments:

- £174.00 Scribe 2000 Ltd – The Scribe 2000 Accounts package.
- £21.09 SSE – Electricity supply for the Playing Field.
- £22.26 BWBSL – Water supply for the Playing Field.
- £88.00 The Society of Local Council Clerks – The Clerk's Subscription.

**4056 - Other Business - Matters of Information:** Justin Witcombe reported that the Village Hall Trust would be holding its Big Draw evening on Friday April 1<sup>st</sup> with (mechanical) pig racing. The Clerk noted he had received a request from the District Council for information about any listed building that should be considered for the Heritage At Risk register. The water point by the war memorial in Westcombe was suggested.

**4057 – Date and Time of Next Meeting:** Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2016 at 7.30pm in the Old School, Batcombe.

*Chris Wildridge*  
*2nd March 2016*