

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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You are Summoned to the Annual Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council to be held on Wednesday 11th May 2016 at 7.30pm in the Jubilee Hall, Batcombe

Members are reminded that the Council has a general duty to consider the following matters in the exercise of any of its functions: Equal Opportunities (race, gender, sexual orientation, marital status and any disability), Crime & Disorder, Health & Safety and Human Rights.

Agenda

1. Election of Chairman & Chairman's Acceptance of Office

This item should be chaired by the current Chairman.

2. Election of Vice Chairman

The main role of the Vice Chairman is to chair meetings of the Parish Council when the Chairman is absent.

3. Apologies and Acceptance of Reasons for Absence

This is necessary as any member who is absent for six months, without the Council accepting their reasons for absence, automatically loses their seat on the Council.

4. Declarations of Interest

*It is the Councillors' responsibility to declare any interests they may have in any item on the Agenda. If you are uncertain please ask the Clerk before the meeting. **Please note** that the District Council's Monitoring Officer has stated that where a Councillor has a pecuniary interest in an item they cannot take part in any discussion on that item. This includes making a statement on the matter before leaving the room.*

5. Public Participation – Open village meeting for fifteen minutes for any member of the public to raise any issue relevant to Batcombe Parish

The Chairman can invite members of the public to speak at this or at any other appropriate point in the meeting.

6. Minutes of Meeting held on Wednesday 13th April 2016 to be agreed and signed. Enclosed.

7. Matters Arising – information updates only.

We have received letters of thanks for sponsoring the pig racing evening in the Village Hall in April from both the Village Hall Trust and the Royal United Hospital Forever Friends Appeal.

Thanks to Justin Witcombe, Ian Sage and Colin Pool for organising the beacon to celebrate HM The Queen's 90th Birthday and thanks to Justin for organising the risk assessment.

8. District and County Councillors' Reports

An opportunity for the District and County Councillors to report on matters relevant to the parish, either in person or in writing.

9. Housing Needs Survey

Jane Birch and Matt Day from the Community Council for Somerset will be attending to discuss with the Parish Council the questions we wish to include in the Housing Needs Survey. An example survey from another parish has been distributed to Councillors previously. Please think about what questions we should have in our Survey before the meeting.

10. Footpaths and Highways

A complaint has been received that dog walkers on Bailey's Lane are leaving bags of dog faeces in residents' wheelie bins and a request made that the Council provide a dog waste bin.

11. Playground - Maintenance Report and Preparation for RoSPA Inspection.

The annual inspection of the Playing Field by RoSPA will take place in June. The mole continues to be active. Thanks to Ian Sage for collecting the playbark for the multiplay equipment.

A complaint has been received that the verge outside the Playing Field has been cut before the daffodils have died back and the cow parsley flowered.

12. Planning Applications:

Planning Application No: 2016/0946/HSE – Installation of a new window on the first floor east elevation. Cherry Cottage, Westcombe – Householder Application.

Plans should be available by the time of the meeting.

Planning Application Updates.

Planning permission and Listed Building Consent has been granted for the change of use of the old butcher's shop at South View to residential use and to convert South View into two separate dwellings on condition that the two parking spaces in the yard opposite are permanently retained for parking.

13. Appointment of Staffing Committee

Our Standing Orders require the appointment of a Staffing Committee. This Committee would consider any complaints against or grievances by the Clerk and conduct an annual review with Clerk. The Committee should consist of three Councillors so that any appeal could be considered by the remaining Councillors. (As relatives of the Clerk, Ian Sage and Jayne Cox should not be members of this committee.)

14. Appointment of Village Hall and Heritage Room Representatives

The Council appoints a representative to the Village Hall Trust Committee. Currently this is Justin Witcombe.

The Council has appointed the Clerk as its representative to help run the Heritage Room. This appointment should be confirmed, unless a Councillor wishes to take on this role. There are three Trustees running the Heritage Room (one each from the Village Hall Trust, the PCC and the Parish Council) and the role involves a commitment to open the Heritage Room on a Saturday afternoon and assist those inquiring about the history of the parish and its former inhabitants.

15. Arrangements for Review of Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Other Matters

Standing Orders require that the Council make arrangements at this meeting for the review of its Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Schedule of Assets, insurance cover, membership of other bodies, complaints procedure, procedures for handling requests made under the Freedom of Information Act, and policy for dealing with the press. I suggest the following timetable: Financial Regulations to be reviewed at the June meeting; Standing Orders to be reviewed at the July meeting; and the Schedule of Assets, Risk Management Policy and insurance cover to be reviewed at the March meeting in time for the preparation of the Annual Report and renewal of the insurance. The Council's other policies were reviewed last year before the election and, unless there are changes to

the models on which they are based, I suggest these do not need to be reviewed until the year before the next Parish Council election in 2019.

16. Insurance Renewal

The insurance premium for the year from June 1st is £276.49. This is an increase of £11.49 on the current year's premium and is due to the increase in Insurance Premium Tax from 6% to 9.5%. Although our current long term agreement has a year to run, Came and Company are offering us a new three year agreement up to 2019. If we accept this agreement our premium would be reduced to £273.75 but there is no time to obtain any alternative quotations.

17. Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31st March 2016

The bank reconciliation for the fourth quarter to 31st March to be verified by the Vice Chairman before the meeting and reported to the Council.

A copy of the Financial Statements is enclosed. The three columns show the previous year's figures, the budget for last year (which was set in the January of the previous year) and the actual figures for last year. The VAT refund was larger than budgeted because of the VAT on the new picnic table purchased with the Health and Well-Being grant in the previous year. No VAT refund had been claimed in 2014-15 as the VAT had been reclaimed part way through the previous year. The allotments rent was £10 more than budgeted but £15 was re-imbursed to an allotment holder who had given up their allotment. Allotment rent has been slightly below budget for the last two years because of periods when one allotment has been vacant. The grants from the Health and Well-being budget for a new notice board, from Awards for All for the Housing Needs Survey and from the Government (via SALC) for a laptop to help comply with the Transparency Code had not been budgeted for. Bank interest was almost nothing because of the minimal interest rates. As a result of the grants receipts were over £3,200 more than budgeted.

The cost of the grass cutting in the Playing Field was slightly more than budgeted due to the mild weather during the winter. The cost of the electricity supply was similar to the previous year but less than budgeted. The cost of the water supply was lower than the previous year when three six-monthly payments were made during the year instead of the usual two. The cost of maintenance was lower than budgeted - £214 was paid for Playbark and £11.95 for a new padlock for the picnic table. Materials for the new fencing cost £434 – this amount was unbudgeted as at the time of setting the budget it was assumed that it would be paid for in the previous year.

The Clerk's salary increased compared to the previous year as a result of the number of hours worked being increased to seven a week from April 2014 and an increase in the hourly rate from January 2015. The Clerk's tax code meant no PAYE was paid and overall the Clerk's salary was as budgeted as there were no further salary increases. The Clerk's expenses were less than budgeted. Unbudgeted expenses included the purchase of a laptop and Office software which the Transparency Code grant contributed towards and the purchase of accounts software. Training and publications were less than budgeted and the data protection registration fee had not been included in the budget. Photocopying was higher than budgeted as the bill included some photocopying from the previous year. Most other administration expenses were largely as budgeted, except that the cost of the Parish Council election was considerably less than expected as the election was not contested.

The grants given by the Council were as budgeted and the expenditure on the allotments was the £15 re-imburement of rent for one allotment holder (and £160 was spent on the allotments after the end of the year). Cutting the grass around the telephone kiosk was slightly less than budgeted and a deposit of £604.50 on the Housing Needs Survey was paid to the Community Council. There were no expenses for Coney Wood as the lease did not proceed.

Details of the earmarked money for the allotments and the grants for different items are given on the back of the Financial Statement. At the end of the year there was £1,078 of allotments money of which £200 would pay for the lease of the field in May and of which £160 had been spent on tidying

up the allotments field, leaving £718 until the rent is paid in November. At the end of the year the Transparency Code grant had been spent on the laptop and the deposit paid on the Housing Needs Survey, leaving a total of £2,208.50 in grant money of which £395 was earmarked for a new notice board and £1,813.50 for the Housing Needs Survey.

The net result of the variations against the budget given above is a surplus of £2,672 on the year instead of the budgeted deficit of £10. At the end of the year the Parish Council had £7,879 in its funds, £3,211 more than anticipated in the budget (partly because of a healthier balance at the start of the year, partly due to the uncontested election and partly because of the grant money received and not yet spent). Of this £1,078 is set aside for the allotments, £1,814 for the Housing Needs Survey and £395 for a new notice board. This means that the Parish Council has funds totalling £4,592 that are not earmarked for specific items. This should be a sufficient reserve to cover the possible cost of a by-election during the coming year (which is the most likely source of major unbudgeted expenditure). SALC recommend that a Parish Council has reserves of between one-third and two-thirds of its precept, which with the current precept means the reserves should be between £2,817 and £5,633. I would recommend that the Parish Council's reserves are nearer the top end of this range.

The Annual Return, which has to be sent to the External Auditor by June 17th, does not need to be considered until the next meeting, by which time the internal auditor should have presented his report.

18. Update on Budget for Year Ending 31st March 2017

As reported at the April meeting, this year's precept of £8,450 has been received along with a Council Tax Support Grant of £71.80. A VAT repayment of £298.74 will be claimed for the year up to March 2016.

Enclosed is an updated projection on this year's budget. The first column shows the actual figures for last year. The second column shows the budget for this year as agreed in January. The third column is the updated projection for this year. Receipts are likely to be as budgeted, except that the VAT Refund will be slightly higher. The expected variations against budget for the payments are: Playing Field maintenance (because we had expected to pay for the repair of the zip wire in the previous year); the laptop and software (which was purchased last year instead of this); the cost of the accounts software (if we decide to renew the licence); audit fees (because receipts last year were over £10,000); the extra cost of the repair of the War Memorial wall; the additional cost of buying two new notice boards (instead of repairing one) and the remaining cost of the Housing Needs Survey. No contributions towards the War Memorial wall repair have been included in the projection

This gives a projected deficit of £4,000 on the year – compared to a budgeted deficit of £500 – but this is largely due to the spending of grant money received in the previous year. This gives funds of £3,860 at the end of the year of which £1,000 will be earmarked for the allotments. However, any contributions towards the cost of the wall repair will increase this figure.

I would like the Parish Council to authorise the purchase of internet security software for the Parish Council laptop – this is likely to cost around £50 a year.

19. Authorisation of Payment

Came & Company - £276.49 or £273.75 – Insurance premium.

T & E A Hollis - £200.00 – Rent of Allotments Field.

Mr G Sparkes (Gardens of Avalon) - £109.00 – Grass cutting in April.

Oaktree Garden Products - £216.00 – Playbark for multiplay equipment.

SSE (Electricity Supply for Playing Field) - £???.?? – (revised invoice not yet received).

20. Other Business – matters of information only.

Please note that the Parish Council cannot make decisions on items that do not appear on the Agenda – so matters raised under this item are for information only.

21. Dates of Future Meetings - Next Meeting: Wednesday 1st June 2016 at 8.00pm in the Old School.

Traditionally the Parish Council has met on the first Wednesday of the month. Thus for 2016/2017, the suggested dates, to be confirmed at the meeting, are:

*1st June 6th July 3rd August 7th September 5th October 2nd November
7th December 4th January 1st February 1st March 5th April 3rd May*

Wednesday April 5th would also be the date of the Annual Parish Meeting. The August meeting will only take place if required to consider planning applications. The Council normally meets at 8.00pm in the summer and at 7.30pm for the rest of the year.

Rob Sage

Rob Sage – Clerk

4th May 2016