

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 11th May 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. John Sommer arrived during item 4103.

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage, Jane Birch and Matt Day from the Community Council for Somerset.

4095 – Election of Chairman and Chairman’s Acceptance of Office: Chris Wildridge was proposed by Justin Witcombe and seconded by Lucinda Edgell. There being no other nominations, Chris Wildridge was duly elected and signed his Acceptance of Office.

4096 – Election of Vice Chairman: Having previously agreed to his nomination, in his absence, the election of John Sommer as Vice Chairman was proposed by Justin Witcombe, seconded by Iona FitzGerald and agreed.

4097 – Apologies for Absence: Dick Skidmore – District Councillor – and Nigel Woollcombe-Adams – County Councillor.

4098 – Declarations of Interest: None.

4099 – Public Participation: None.

4100 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 13th April 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4101 – Matters Arising: Justin Witcombe stated that he would not now be able to remove the rubbish from the allotments. Letters of thanks for sponsoring the Pig Racing Evening had been received from the Village Hall Trust and the Royal United Hospital Forever Friends Appeal. Justin Witcombe, Ian Sage and Colin Pool were thanked for organising the beacon to celebrate HM The Queen’s 90th Birthday.

The Clerk reported that Christopher Cox would undertake the repairs to the War Memorial wall either before or after the commemoration of the Battle of the Somme on July 1st. The Clerk to inform those looking after the War Memorial garden.

4102 – District and County Councillors’ Reports: None.

4103 – Housing Needs Survey: John Sommer arrived at this point, declared a pecuniary interest in the Housing Needs Survey and left the meeting for this item. A draft Housing Needs Survey for the parish of Broadway had been distributed to Councillors electronically before the meeting and Jane Birch from the Community Council for Somerset distributed a draft Housing Needs Survey for Batcombe at the meeting. The questions in the Survey were looked at and tailored to the needs of Batcombe. References to large developments and apartments were removed and it was agreed to move the section on Affordable Housing to the beginning of the Survey. It was also agreed to keep the section on New Open Market Housing

but it include a note that the District Council's Local Plan did not allow for further development in Batcombe.

The Chairman agreed to write the introduction to the Survey and a piece for the Parish Magazine. Following discussion of the timing of the Survey it was agreed to distribute the Survey in June with a closing date of July 15th. A reminder would be placed in the July magazine. The contents of the Survey would be agreed at the June meeting.

4104 – Footpaths and Highways: A complaint had been received that dog walkers on Bailey's Lane had been leaving bags of dog faeces in residents' wheelie bins and a request made that the Parish Council provide a dog waste bin. It was noted that the Council had previously discussed the provision of dog waste bins and had decided against providing bins because of the potential issues with emptying the bins.

It was noted that the state of the roads was very poor especially on Hincombe Hill and by Churchbridge Lodge. The problems had been reported to Somerset Highways by the Clerk and by Justin Witcombe. It was noted that some of the potholes had been marked by not all of them. The Clerk to write to Somerset Highways noting the seriously poor state of the roads.

4105 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report and Preparation for RoSPA Inspection: The annual inspection by RoSPA would take place in June. Ian Sage was thanked for collecting the playbark for the multiplay equipment. The Chairman volunteered to obtain wood preservative and brushes to treat the equipment before the playbark was added. It was agreed to monitor the activity of the moles in the Playing Field.

A complaint had been received that the verge outside the Playing Field had been cut before the daffodils had died back. The Chairman stated that he would e-mail the contractor who cut the Playing Field grass.

4106 – Planning Applications: Planning Application No: 2016/0946/HSE – Installation of a new window on the first floor east elevation. Cherry Cottage, Westcombe – Householder Application. The Parish Council recommended approval as there were no objections to the proposed new window.

Planning Application Updates: Planning permission and Listed Building Consent had 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 were permanently retained for parking.

4107 – Appointment of Staffing Committee: Chris Wildridge, Justin Witcombe and Lucinda Edgell were re-appointed to the Staffing Committee, which would meet to consider any complaints against or grievances by the Clerk.

4108 – Appointment of Village Hall and Heritage Room Representatives: It was agreed that Justin Witcombe should continue as the Village Hall Representative and that the Clerk should continue as the Heritage Room Representative.

4109 – Arrangements for Review of Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Other Matters: It was agreed that the Financial Regulations would be reviewed at the June meeting, Standing Orders at the July meeting, and the Schedule of Assets, Risk Management Policy and insurance cover be reviewed at the March meeting. It was also agreed that the Council's other policies would be reviewed in the year leading up to the next Parish Council election.

4110 – Insurance Renewal: The insurance premium for the year from June 1st was £276.49, an increase of £11.49 on the current year's premium due to the increase in Insurance Premium Tax. The Council agreed to a new three year agreement up to 2019 with Came & Company under which the premium was reduced to £273.75.

4111 – Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31st March 2016: The bank reconciliation for the fourth quarter to 31st March 2016 was verified by the Vice Chairman and reported to the Council.

A copy of the financial statements had been distributed with the Agendas. The following notes were taken as having been read by Councillors, who were asked if they had any questions for the Clerk. 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 had been slightly below budget for the last two years because of periods when one allotment had 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 were 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 was 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 was 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. 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.

The Clerk noted that the Annual Return, which was sent to the External Auditor, did not need to be considered until the next meeting, by which time the internal auditor would have presented his report.

4112 – Update on Budget for Year Ending 31st March 2017: As reported at the previous meeting the precept of £8,450 had been paid into the Council's bank account along with a Council Tax Support grant of £71.80. A VAT repayment of £298.74 had been claimed for the year to March 31st 2016.

An update on the budget for the current year had been distributed with the Agendas. Receipts were likely to be as budgeted except that the VAT claim was higher than budgeted. The expected variations against budget for the payments were: Playing Field maintenance (because it had been anticipated that the repair of the zip wire would have been paid in the previous year); the laptop and software (which was purchased in the previous year instead of the current one); the cost of the accounts software (if the licence is renewed); audit fees (because receipts in the previous 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 had been included in the projection but were hoped for.

This gave a projected deficit of £4,000 on the year – compared to a budgeted deficit of £500 – largely due to the spending of grant money received in the previous year. This gave 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 would increase this figure.

The Parish Council authorised the Clerk to purchase internet security software for the Parish Council laptop – at a likely cost of around £50 a year.

4113 - Authorisation of payment: Councillors authorised the following payments:

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| £273.75 | Came & Company – Insurance premium. |
| £216.00 | Oaktree Garden Products – playbark for multiplay equipment. |
| £200.00 | T & E A Hollis – Lease of allotments field. |
| £109.00 | Gardens of Avalon – Grass cutting for April. |
| £22.80 | SSE – Electricity for Playing Field, January - April 2016. |
| £101.79 | Somerset Association of Local Councils – Affiliation fees. |

4114 - Other Business - Matters of Information: The Chairman expressed his concern over the academisation of schools.

4115 - Dates of Future Meetings: The following dates were agreed for the monthly meetings of the Parish Council during the coming year, all being the first Wednesday of the month:

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

The date in April would also be the date of the Annual Parish Meeting and the August meeting would only be held if there were planning applications to consider. The Council to meet at 8.00pm in the summer and 7.30pm the rest of the year.

Chris Wildridge
1st June 2016