

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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You are Summoned to the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council to be held on Wednesday 7th September 2016 at 8.00pm in the Old School, 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. Apologies and Acceptance of Reasons for Absence

2. Declarations of Interest and Granting of Dispensations

Councillors' Register of Interests forms have now been published on the Mendip District Council website. This means that Councillors need only declare interests that have not been disclosed in the Register of Interests. However, it would be good practice to declare any interests.

3. 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.

4. Minutes of the Meetings held on Wednesdays 3rd August 2016 and 24th August 2016 to be agreed and signed. Enclosed.

5. Matters Arising – information updates only.

None that are not included in the Agenda below.

6. 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.

7. Footpaths and Highways

We have been notified that Hincombe Hill (the road from the A359) will be closed from 23rd September for three days to allow resurfacing to take place. The road will be closed from the telephone exchange to the end of Linch Lane on Millards Hill. There are notices up stating that roadworks will be taking place from September 5th, hopefully before the resurfacing.

The Chairman took our County Councillor, Nigel Woollcombe-Adams, on a tour of the roads in Batcombe in August to consider the state of the roads and the difficulties of accessing the village if the roads are unsalted in icy weather. The Chairman to report back.

Somerset County Council have launched a new traffic and travel website – www.travelsomerset.co.uk The website provides updates "24/7" on what is happening on the roads in Somerset from planned roadworks and public events to unplanned incidents, accidents and congestion. It also has a searchable map showing current and future roadworks.

8. Pilot Market Day Bus to Frome

The Chairman to update on developments for the planned pilot for a market day bus to Frome on a Wednesday due to begin in September.

9. Allotments

We have received a request to rent the allotment that will become vacant in November from a resident of Kale Street. The allotment rents become due in November.

10. Westcombe Telephone Kiosk

John Sommer reports that the light in the telephone kiosk at Westcombe is not working. Changing the fluorescent tubes has not worked, so we will need to get an electrician to look at it. John has secured the lamp cover which was loose and turned off the power supply. The kiosk belongs to the Parish Council, although BT currently provide the power for the light.

11. Playground

Maintenance Report and Fence – *Thanks to Justin Witcombe and Antony Slocombe for repairing the leak in the drinking fountain. The repair was temporary and held during the Fete but the drinking fountain is now leaking again. A replacement unit would need to be shipped from America, but Justin is hoping to find a compatible washer on the internet. The water bill for the six months to July indicates that 20 cubic metres of water were used in that period (that is 20,000 litres or 4,500 gallons). This was probably a result of the tap being left on overnight in the bus shelter. (The leak in the water fountain only developed in August.) The Council may wish to consider options for preventing the tap being left on in future. The Chairman proposes that the work agreed to attach a drain to the drinking fountain be undertaken as soon as possible.*

The Playing Field was inspected after the Annual Fete and it was left in a good condition considering the number of people at the Fete. Rob Jones, who was organising the Fete, thanked the Parish Council for its help. It was noted that the ground in the Playing Field is now quite bumpy (possibly as a result of the heifers getting into the Playing Field earlier in the summer). The Chairman notes that the proposed rolling of the Playing Field surface in the Spring was not undertaken and proposes that a "To Do" list is kept to ensure agreed items of work are not overlooked if volunteers are unable to undertake them immediately. This list could be included in the Agenda notes each month at the end of the relevant items. The repair of the damaged fence where the heifers got into the Playing Field would be one item for this list.

Zip wire and multiplay equipment. *In early August a team from Vita Play came to tighten the zip wire as requested following their earlier repair. They tightened the zip wire as much as they felt was safe, but were concerned with the large amount of flex in the timber uprights. They filmed the movement and sent it to their manager, who is also a qualified safety inspector. Despite being on holiday, he contacted the Clerk to advise that the zip wire be taken out of commission until it could be examined by a safety inspector and offered to inspect it the following week. The Clerk accepted his offer and immobilised the zip wire with a padlock and chain. After inspecting the zip wire he phoned the Clerk to state that the zip wire should not be used as there was a risk that the timber supports could give way at any time with potentially serious consequences. Ian Sage has since removed the jockey unit from the zip wire so that it cannot be used. The manager at Vita Play has offered to provide some options for what can be done with the zip wire, and which will hopefully be available for the meeting. The Council may wish to obtain an independent inspection of the zip wire, but it should be noted that the movement in the timber uprights has become significantly worse since the RoSPA inspection in June.*

The Council also needs to consider options for tackling the rot in the multiplay equipment. Iona FitzGerald has proposed the installation of a slack line in the Playing Field as a temporary measure while the zip wire is out of action. Iona has e-mailed details of this to Councillors.

12. Planning Applications:

Planning Application No: 2016/2137/HSE – Proposed single storey extension.

Honeycliff Cottages, Honeycliff, Batcombe. Householder Application.

Honeycliff Cottages are the two cottages at Honeycliff just before the entrance to the bridleway when coming from Batcombe. The two cottages are at right angles to the road and the proposed extension is on the far end of the cottage furthest from the road.

Planning Application No: 2016/2153/TCA

Notification of proposed works to trees in a conservation area: Ash (T1) fell to ground level.

Batcombe Village Hall, Back Lane, Batcombe. Works/Felling Trees in a CA.

This is the large Ash tree growing into the boundary wall with Ivy Wall House, which is damaging the wall.

Planning Application Updates.

The District Council has granted permission for the variation of condition 3 on the planning permission for Carrot Hill House allowing the development to be constructed to Level 4 in the Code for Sustainable Houses. The Parish Council had recommended refusal of permission.

The District Council decided that prior approval was not required for a steel portal framed barn at Lower Westcombe Farm. Planning permission has been granted for the erection of a garage side extension at Beeches Farm.

13. Housing Needs Survey / Community Led Housing Survey

The person undertaking the analysis of the results of the Housing Needs Survey for the Community Council for Somerset is currently on leave due to the serious illness of a family member. As a result, the results of the survey will not be available for this meeting and the presentation by Matt Day from the Community Council for Somerset has been postponed until the October meeting.

The National Association of Local Councils have requested a response to the enclosed survey on Community Led Housing by the end of September. Please consider how you feel the Council should respond to those questions asking the view of the Council before the meeting.

14. Defibrillator for Batcombe

This item was deferred from the July meeting. It was agreed to consider this item following the report of a campaign for a defibrillator in the parish on social media. In the past it has been suggested that a defibrillator be placed in the unused telephone kiosk in Westcombe. In his discussions on the Emergency Plan with the Village Hall Trust, the Chairman suggested placing a defibrillator at the Village Hall, although the Trust felt that the Three Horseshoes would be a better location.

To provide a defibrillator, a location would have to be agreed, funds raised and volunteers found to maintain the defibrillator and to take training in resuscitation. A defibrillator costs between £1,000 - £1,500, an external cabinet £600 and there will other costs of installation – the defibrillator has to have a power supply to remain charged. Grants may be available towards these costs. A group would need to be formed to undertake fundraising, organise training and looking after the equipment once installed. This group does not have to be under the direction of the Parish Council, but the Council could decide to take a lead if it wished.

15. Administration

The Parish Council now has a dedicated e-mail address - batcombec@uwclub.net - e-mails sent to this address will go directly to the Parish Council's laptop.

At the request of the Staffing Committee the Clerk has produced a detailed record of hours worked over the year to 31st March 2016. As expected this shows that the first quarter of the year (April to June) is very busy – as a result of the two annual meetings, the end of year accounts, internal and

external audits and transparency code requirements. This means that the Clerk works extra hours during this period, which are then made up over the rest of the year, which tends to be less busy. At the end of the year the Clerk had worked 11 hours above the seven hours a week he is paid for – this equates to a quarter of an hour each week.

The Chairman proposes that the Clerk should be paid for these extra 11 hours. The Clerk's Contract of Employment states that additional hours should be reimbursed at the normal rate or the Clerk may take time off in lieu. It goes on to state that additional hours will be reimbursed as time in lieu and that "exceptional" additional hours must be approved by the Council and will then be reimbursed at the normal rate. The Clerk understands this to mean that normally additional hours will be reimbursed by time off in lieu (which is reflected in the established practice of additional hours being worked in the first quarter of the year and then time taken in lieu over the remainder of the year) but exceptional additional hours (for example if the Clerk is asked to take on additional work) need to be approved by the Council beforehand and then will be reimbursed at the normal rate.

The Chairman has asked for an update on progress on the accounts software. This was delayed by waiting for the Parish Council laptop so the software could be loaded on this. The Clerk plans to have an evaluation of the software available for the next meeting.

16. External Auditor's Report

The external auditor Grant Thornton have returned the Annual Return having completed their audit. No matters had come to their attention "giving cause for concern that the relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met". However, they did wish to bring to the attention of the Parish Council that the Annual Governance Statement (Section 1 of the Annual Return) should be considered, approved and signed before the Accounting Statements (Section 2). This was actually done, but both items were recorded under the same Minute reference. The External Auditor states that the Parish Council should ensure that the Minute references clearly demonstrate that the Annual Governance Statement was approved before the Accounting Statements (i.e. there needs to be a Minute for the approval of each section of the Annual Return instead of considering the whole Return under one item). The Annual Return will be available for inspection at the meeting.

17. Bank Reconciliation and Budget Update

Our Financial Regulations require that every quarter a bank reconciliation is produced by the Clerk, checked by a member of the Council, and reported to the Council as soon as possible after the end of the quarter. As we only had a short meeting in August this will be the first opportunity to report on the bank reconciliation for the quarter to 30th June.

Financial Regulations also require the Clerk to provide an update on the budget each quarter. The enclosed sheet with four columns of figures shows the accounts for last year, the budget for this year, receipts and payments to date this year and a projection for this year based on expenditure to date.

Receipts are projected to be approximately £1,000 more than the budgeted figure because of the donations for the war memorial wall repairs. To date we have received £451 from the Queen's Birthday street party, £130 from the Somme breakfast and a £200 donation from the local branch of the Royal British Legion. We are expecting a further donation from the local Shoot. If the total donations for the war memorial come to around £1,000, this will mean that expenditure from Parish Council funds will be close to the originally budgeted £600. [Note: the Chairman believes that the budgeted figure for the war memorial wall repair was increased to £1,200 when the budget was set in January, although the Clerk has no record of this decision. However, as the precept was not increased, the additional expenditure would have to have been taken from reserves and so does not make any difference to the financial position.]

The projection for the Playing Field expenditure is £500 over budget because the repair to the zip wire was expected to have been paid in the previous year. The projection does not include any additional expenditure on the Playing Field equipment that may be decided upon.

The projection for the expenditure on Administration is £300 under budget because the purchase of the Parish Council laptop and software was budgeted for this year but actually purchased at the end of last year. The projection includes continued expenditure on the accounts software, which is to be decided after evaluation by the Clerk.

The projection for the expenditure on Other items is £3,140 over budget because of additional expenditure on the allotments; the purchase of the repair to the War Memorial wall being £1,000 over budget; purchasing two new notice boards instead of repairing the one at Westcombe; and the remaining cost of the Housing Needs Survey (paid for by a grant received last year but not included in this year's budget).

Although the projected deficit is £2,866 compared to a budgeted deficit of £500, the healthier position at the start of the year (as a result of the grants for the Housing Needs Survey, new notice board and laptop) means that the projected funds at the end of the year are around £5,000 – slightly better than expected when the budget was made.

It should be noted that approximately £1,200 of the figure will be earmarked for the allotments and that no provision has been made for additional repairs and maintenance in the Playing Field.

18. Authorisation of Payment

£51.11 BWBSL – Water supply to the Playing Field (January to July).

This is a retrospective authorisation as payment was required in August.

£???.00 Gardens of Avalon – Grass and hedge cutting in August. *(Invoice not yet received.)*

19. Other Business – matters of information only.

Somerset County Council and an organisation called ToHealth have invited us to host a free NHS Health Check event in the parish. The free health check is available to parishioners who are aged 40-74 and who have not had a health check in the last five years. They suggest combining the health check with a community event such as a coffee morning. We need to respond by October 31st so can leave this to the next meeting.

Frome Town Council have invited local Parish Councils to a meeting on Thursday September 15th at 7.00pm in the Assembly Rooms in Frome. This is a forum for Councillors to share discussion topics relevant to all parishes and suggested topics are buses, working with the District and County Councils and the cost of housing. We are asked to confirm the names of those attending.

The AGM of the Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC) will take place on Saturday 17th September in the Edgar Hall in Somerton starting at 10.00am. Guest speakers include a member of Frome Town Council on their year as NALC Council of the Year, a solicitor on employment law and the Somerset Waste Partnership. There is a free buffet lunch. We can send two representatives, one of which can be the Clerk, but need to confirm lunch attendance as soon as possible.

The AGM of the Community Council for Somerset (CCS) will take place on Thursday 6th October in the Edgar Community Hall in Somerton at 2.00pm. This will be followed by a free training session on “Making the most of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)”. CCS ask that if we are unable to attend the AGM we complete and return a proxy voting form.

The AGM of the Somerset Playing Fields Association will take place on Tuesday 13th September at 7.30pm in Woolavington Village Hall. If anyone is interested, they are looking for new members of their Executive Committee.

20. Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 5th October at 8.00pm in the Old School Rooms, Batcombe.

Rob Sage