

# BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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## Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2016 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 8.00pm.

**Present - Councillors:** Chris Wildridge – Chairman, Jayne Cox (arrived during item 4171), Iona FitzGerald, Ian Sage, John Sommer and Justin Witcombe.

**Also Present:** The Clerk – Rob Sage, and two members of the public.

**4169 – Apologies for Absence:** Lucinda Edgell, due to child commitments, and Jayne Cox for late arrival.

**4170 – Declarations of Interest:** John Sommer declared a pecuniary interest in the planning application for Honeycliff Cottages and Iona FitzGerald declared a pecuniary interest in the application for tree works at Batcombe Village Hall (both item 4180).

**4171 – Public Participation:** Janet Jones updated the Parish Council on the position regarding superfast broadband. Broadband is currently provided by BT with a theoretical maximum speed of 24Mbps, although actual speeds are much less. BT's approach to providing faster broadband is to upgrade the cabinet, but as Batcombe has no cabinets this will make no difference here. BT has offered to install a cabinet at Lower Farm at a cost of £15,943, but this would not be a solution for Westcombe or outlying properties. A company called Truespeed were offering to install a fibre connection to every property that wanted it at a set up cost of £120 and monthly charges of £47.50 or more. Another six households were needed to sign up for a feasibility study to be undertaken by Truespeed. [Jayne Cox arrived at the meeting.]

**4172 – Minutes of the Meetings held on Wednesdays 3<sup>rd</sup> August and 24<sup>th</sup> August 2016** were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**4173 – Matters Arising:** None.

**4174 – District and County Councillors' Reports:** None.

**4175 – Footpaths and Highways:** The Parish Council had been notified that Hincombe Hill (the road from the A359 junction into the village) would be closed from 23<sup>rd</sup> September for three days to allow resurfacing to take place. The road would be closed from the telephone exchange to the end of Linch Lane. It was noted that there were notices up stating that roadworks will be taking place on this road from September 5<sup>th</sup>.

The Chairman reported that he had taken our County Councillor, Nigel Woollcombe-Adams, on a tour of the roads in Batcombe in August pointing out the potholes and emphasising the need for the salting of the roads given that every road out of the village included a steep slope. The Chairman reported that the County Councillor was having consultations with Somerset Highways on the issue and would take the matter higher in the County Council if needed.

The Chairman noted that there was a major problem with poor parking in Kale Street and if drivers did not park sensibly the salting of the roads would be suspended again, even if re-

instated. It was agreed to deliver a leaflet to each house in Kale Street. The Chairman would draft the leaflet and circulate to Councillors for their agreement. It was noted that there was also a serious problem with parking at the Old Post Office.

The Clerk reported that Somerset County Council had launched a new traffic and travel website – [www.travelsomerset.co.uk](http://www.travelsomerset.co.uk) – that provided updates “24/7” on what was happening on the roads in Somerset from planned roadworks and public events to unplanned incidents, accidents and congestion. It also had a searchable map showing current and future roadworks.

**4176 – Pilot Market Day Bus to Frome:** The Chairman reported that he had signed the Memorandum of Understanding with Mendip Community Transport to allow the pilot bus scheme to proceed. The pilot would be launched later in September for six weeks.

**4177 – Allotments:** The Clerk reported that there had been one response to the advertising of the allotment that would become vacant in November from a resident of Kale Street. It was agreed to rent the allotment to this applicant.

**4178 – Westcombe Telephone Kiosk:** John Sommer reported that the light in the redundant telephone kiosk was no longer working. It was agreed that a repair was not necessary as the light was not needed. John had made the light secure.

**4179 – Playing Field:** Thanks were made to Justin Witcombe and Antony Slocombe for repairing the leak in the drinking fountain. The repair was temporary and while it had held during the Fete, the drinking fountain was leaking again and needed further attention. The water bill for the six months to July indicated that 20 cubic metres of water were used in that period. This was probably the result of the tap in the bus shelter being left on overnight as the leak in the water fountain only developed in August. Ian Sage volunteered to speak to a plumber about a lockable tap. The Chairman proposed that the work previously agreed to attach a drain to the water fountain be undertaken as soon as possible.

The Playing Field was inspected after the Annual Fete and was left in a good condition considering the number of people at the Fete. Rob Jones, who organised the Fete, thanked the Parish Council for its help. The ground in the Playing Field was quite bumpy (possibly as a result of the heifers getting into the Playing Field earlier in the summer). The Chairman noted that the proposed rolling of the Playing Field surface in the Spring had not been undertaken.

**Zip wire and multiplay equipment.** The Clerk reported that in early August a team from Vita Play had come to tighten the zip wire as requested following their earlier repair. They were concerned with the large amount of flex in the timber uprights and their manager 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 himself the following week. The Clerk accepted this offer and immobilised the zip wire with a padlock and chain. After the inspection the manager stated 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 and Ian Sage removed the jockey unit from the zip wire to prevent it being used. In his report the manager at Vita Play stated that the Parish Council had two options: either to dig out and repair the foundations around the existing posts or replace the zip wire with a new unit. He also quoted a price for Vita Play undertaking the second option.

Iona FitzGerald reported that Mainstay Projects, the original installers of the zip wire, were willing to undertake the first option. It was agreed that an independent inspection of the zip wire was needed and the Clerk was asked to obtain a quote. Ian Sage felt that any inspection should include the structural integrity of the zip wire and the multiplay equipment. It was

agreed that Ian should provide the Clerk with advice on what the inspection should cover. The Clerk was authorised to go ahead with the inspection after consultation with Councillors, provided the cost was £200 or less. Iona FitzGerald proposed a site meeting with Mainstay Projects, as they were confident that there were solutions to the various problems that would not cost too much money, and Iona volunteered to get everyone together.

**4180 – Planning Applications:** Planning Application No: 2016/2137/HSE – Proposed single storey extension. Honeycliff Cottages, Honeycliff, Batcombe. Householder Application. John Sommer left the room for this item. The Council decided to recommend approval as there were no objections to the proposed extension.

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. Iona FitzGerald left the room for this item and Justin Witcombe declared an interest as the Parish Council’s Village Hall representative. The Council decided to recommend approval on the grounds that the tree was damaging the boundary wall with the neighbouring property.

#### **Planning Application Updates.**

The Clerk reported that the District Council had 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 had decided that prior approval was not required for a steel portal framed barn at Lower Westcombe Farm. Planning permission had been granted for the erection of a garage side extension at Beeches Farm and for the erection of a greenhouse/shed at Turret House, Church Farm.

**4181 – Housing Needs Survey:** The presentation of the results of the Survey had been postponed to the October meeting as the person undertaking the analysis of the results was on leave due to the serious illness of a family member.

The National Association of Local Councils had requested a response to a survey on Community Led Housing. Completion of the survey was delegated to the Clerk.

**4182 – Defibrillator for Batcombe:** Justin Witcombe noted that the provision of a defibrillator in the parish had been discussed under the Emergency Plan and it had been felt that The Three Horseshoes would be the best location. Justin reported that the landlord of The Three Horseshoes would be happy with this and there was the possibility of some funding for a defibrillator.

The Parish Council was willing to support a group that was prepared to undertake the necessary fundraising, organise training and looking after the equipment once installed. Iona FitzGerald offered to contact a resident who had previously expressed an interest in this.

**4183 – Administration:** The Clerk reported that he had set up a dedicated e-mail address for the Parish Council – [batcombec@uwclub.net](mailto:batcombec@uwclub.net) – and that e-mails sent to this address would go directly to the Parish Council’s laptop rather than to the Clerk’s personal computer. It was suggested that a free e-mail address would allow the same e-mail to be used should there be a change of Clerk.

At the request of the Staffing Committee the Clerk had produced a detailed record of hours worked over the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016. This showed that the first quarter of the year (April to June) was busy – as a result of the two annual meetings, the end of year accounts, internal and external audits and transparency code requirements. As a result the Clerk worked extra hours during this period, that were then made up over the rest of the year. Over the year as a whole the Clerk had worked 11 hours more than his contracted seven hours a week. The Chairman proposed that the Clerk should be paid for the extra 11 hours and this was agreed.

The Chairman had asked for an update on progress on the evaluation of the accounts software. The Clerk noted that this was delayed by waiting for the Parish Council laptop so the software could be loaded on this, and stated that he planned to have an evaluation of the software available for the next meeting.

**4184 – External Auditor’s Report:** The Clerk reported that the external auditors Grant Thornton had 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 Minute references should demonstrate that the Annual Governance Statement had been approved before the Accounting Statements. The Clerk noted that this was done in the correct order, but that both approvals had been recorded under a single Minute reference. The Annual Return was made available for inspection at the meeting and the Clerk reported that the Notice of the Conclusion of Audit had been published.

**4185 – Bank Reconciliation and Budget Update:** John Sommer reported to the meeting that he had checked the bank reconciliation prepared by the Clerk for the quarter to 30<sup>th</sup> June.

An update on the budget had been enclosed with the Agendas, and this showed the accounts for the previous year, the budget for the current year, receipts and payments to date in the current year and a projection for this year based on the receipts and payment to date. The Clerk reported that total receipts for the year were projected to be approximately £1,000 more than the budgeted figure because of the donations for the war memorial wall repairs. These consisted of £451 from the Queen’s Birthday street party, £130 from the Somme breakfast, £200 from the local Shoot and a personal donation of £300 and totalled £1,081. As a result the expenditure on the war memorial wall from Parish Council funds was close to the originally budgeted £600. Thanks for these donations to be placed in the parish magazine.

The Clerk noted that the projection for the Playing Field expenditure was £500 over budget because the repair to the zip wire was expected to have been paid in the previous year. The projection did not include any additional expenditure on the Playing Field equipment that the Council might decide upon in future.

The projection for the expenditure on Administration was £300 under budget because the purchase of the Parish Council laptop and software was budgeted for the current year but actually purchased at the end of the previous year. The projection included continued expenditure on the accounts software, which would be decided upon after evaluation by the Clerk.

The projection for the expenditure on Other items was £3,140 over budget because of additional expenditure on the allotments; 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 in the previous year but not included in the current year’s budget).

Although the projected deficit was £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) meant that the projected funds at the end of the year were around £5,000 – slightly better than expected when the budget was made. The Clerk noted that around £1,200 of the figure would be earmarked for the allotments and that no provision had been made for additional repairs and maintenance in the Playing Field.

**4186 - Authorisation of payment:** Councillors authorised the following payments:

- £51.11 BWBSL – Water supply to the Playing Field (January to July).  
This was a retrospective authorisation as payment had been required in August.
- £145.00 Gardens of Avalon – Grass and hedge cutting in August.
- £111.59 Read Agriservices Ltd – Post concrete and wood preservative.

**4187 - Other Business - Matters of Information Only:** Somerset County Council and an organisation called ToHealth had invited the Parish Council to host a free NHS Health Check event in the parish for parishioners aged 40-74. A decision was deferred to the next meeting.

Frome Town Council had invited local Parish Councils to a meeting on Thursday September 15<sup>th</sup> in the Assembly Rooms in Frome, to discuss topics relevant to all the parishes. The Chairman stated that he would attend on behalf of the Parish Council.

The AGMs of the Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC) on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> September; the Community Council for Somerset (CCS) on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> October; and the Somerset Playing Fields Association on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> September were noted.

John Sommer noted that a lorry had been seen jetting the road drains and Iona FitzGerald reported that there had been a break-in at the Wild Beer Company.

A complaint had been received from a resident about a drone hovering over her garden. A note to be placed in the parish magazine asked drone users to respect other residents' privacy.

The Clerk reported that the Licensing Department at South Somerset District Council had invited the Parish Council to send a representative to a de-brief on the Shindig Weekend at Gilcombe Farm. No one was able to attend but the Clerk was asked to report that there had been no complaints received about the festival.

A request had been received for the Parish Council to reconsider its refusal to install dog poo bins in the parish. To be considered at the next meeting.

**4188 – Date and Time of Next Meeting:** Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> October at 8.00pm in the Old School Rooms, Batcombe.

*Chris Willdridge*  
*5th October 2016*