

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 5th October 2016 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 8.00pm.

Present - Councillors: Chris Wildridge – Chairman, Jayne Cox, Lucinda Edgell (arrived during item 4193), Iona FitzGerald, Ian Sage and John Sommer.

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage, Matt Day from the Community Council for Somerset and five members of the public.

4189 – Apologies for Absence: Justin Witcombe, who was working and Lucinda Edgell for late arrival.

4190 – Declarations of Interest: Ian Sage and Jayne Cox both declared an interest in item 4205 – authorisation of payment of the Clerk's salary and expenses – as relatives of the Clerk.

4191 – Public Participation: Richard Mitchell inquired about the repair of the fingerpost by The Round House. It was noted that Somerset Highways were happy for volunteers to undertake the maintenance of fingerposts as they were not a high priority for their limited budget.

4192 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 7th September 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4193 – Matters Arising: Defibrillator – Iona FitzGerald reported that she had spoken to Dan Jarman who was happy to be involved with fundraising for and organising the maintenance of a defibrillator. It was suggested that Justin Witcombe and Dan Jarman should look into organising a group to fundraise and look after a defibrillator.

4194 – Housing Needs Survey: Electronic copies of the report had been distributed to Councillors and some paper copies were made available. Matt Day from the Community Council for Somerset stated that there had been a good response and he was available to answer questions. He noted that the Community Council no longer had Rural Housing Enablers but could make suggestions for what to do next. The Chairman summarised the report noting that there was a lot of support for affordable 2-3 bedroom houses for people with a local connection to rent and also some for older people wanting to downsize. Ian Sage was surprised that there was only one response from outside the village.

The survey had revealed a housing need for seven households, five wanting rented accommodation. It was noted that when the last Housing Needs Survey had been undertaken, the development on Church Farm had provided the opportunity to build Ash Tree Cottages. Matt Day noted that if local landowner was willing to sell land near the village at agricultural prices it could be developed as a rural exception site to provide homes for local people.

The Council agreed to sign off the report and Matt Day promised to provide a version that the Parish Council could publish. Matt Day suggested meeting with Wessex Community Assets who could advise on the setting up of a Community Land Trust. He also suggested meeting with the Mendip Housing Officer, Nina Richards, to discuss options for moving forward and it was agreed that the Chairman and Iona FitzGerald would do so and report back. A meeting

would also be arranged at the end of November to present the report to the parish – the Clerk to arrange a date.

4195 – District and County Councillors’ Reports: None.

4196 – Footpaths and Highways: A leaflet on the necessity for considerate parking in Kale Street had been prepared by the Chairman, but had not yet been distributed as there had been no confirmation as to whether the winter salting of the road through Batcombe would be reinstated.

Proposed Public Path Diversion Order – Restricted Byway SM 2/1 past Lodge Farm. The County Council’s Rights of Way team had sent a revised plan for the proposed diversion away from the residential dwellings at Lodge Farm. Jayne Cox noted that there were a number of additional gates to go through. Councillors had not indicated a wish to comment on the change, which would have required an additional meeting.

Jayne Cox reported that someone had driven a 4x4 vehicle up the Honeycliff bridleway. The damage was not significant but could be if it happened again. The Chairman to write a piece for the parish magazine.

4197 – Pilot Market Day Bus to Frome: The record of usage of the bus showed that four people from Westcombe had taken the bus on the first Wednesday and two from Batcombe on the second Wednesday. Overall 33 people had used the bus on the first two weeks and the cost to the Parish Council for these two weeks was £52.19. If numbers remained the same the pilot would cost the Council £156 over the full six weeks.

Michael Gay from Wanstrow had proposed that the Parish Council approve a further trial of six weeks with a single run spending less time in Frome. This would cost less than the initial trial with a maximum cost per Parish Council of £155. A response was needed by October 11th to allow Mendip Community Transport to apply for a change of licence. The Council was divided on the issue with three Councillors in favour of the extended trial and three opposed. The Clerk advised that as the additional trial was not on the Agenda that an extra meeting should be called to consider it. Although in favour of the additional trial, the Chairman did not use his casting vote to approve the trial, due to the divided opinions within the Council. Iona FitzGerald requested that her vote in favour of the trial be recorded.

4198 – NHS Health Check: Iona FitzGerald and Lucinda Edgell agreed to organise a coffee morning at which the health check could take place. The Clerk to respond to the invitation to hold a health check event.

4199 – Dog Poo Bins: A resident had requested that the Council reconsider its decision not to install dog poo bins in the parish as this might reduce the amount of dog faeces being left around the village. The Council decided not to change its policy.

4200 – Playing Field: Thanks were made to Ian Sage for repairing the fence that had been damaged when heifers broke into the Playing Field and for replacing the missing support for the fencepost at the gap in the corner of the field. Ian was also thanked for liaising with a local plumber over the repair of the drinking fountain and Justin Witcombe was thanked for connecting a drain to the drinking fountain that empties to the rear of the bus shelter. The Clerk noted that the padlocked cap he had placed on the tap in the bus shelter, to prevent water being wasted when the tap was left on, had been removed, but he had replaced the cap and taped it in place. Ian Sage suggested removing the tap and only replacing it for the Fete and this was agreed.

The Clerk reported that RoSPA would do an additional inspection of the equipment in the Playing Field at a cost of £225. Councillors could be present at the inspection and ask advice of the inspector, but the inspection did not include a survey of the state of the equipment below ground. Iona FitzGerald had circulated an e-mail from Anthony Greenhalgh at Mainstay projects proposing to make repairs to the equipment in the Playing Field, including reconcreting the supports for the zip-wire and placing steel legs on the fort for a nominal sum. Iona suggested a site meeting with Anthony Greenhalgh to consider his proposals and this was agreed. Iona to organise the meeting and Iona, the Chairman, Ian Sage and the Clerk to attend. The RoSPA inspection would be deferred until after the work agreed had been completed.

The Clerk reported that he had been provided with a copy of the risk assessment for the use of the bale tossing equipment at the Annual Fete. The risk assessment was necessary to satisfy the PCC's insurers now that the PCC owned this equipment.

A request was made for additional cuts of the grass in the Playing Field and it was agreed to consider this when the budget was discussed at the next meeting.

4201 – Planning Applications: Planning Application No: 2016/1811/FUL – Retrospective: Erection of replacement dwelling (amended from that approved under permission 2011/0075) to include retention of plantroom outbuilding and alterations to main roof to include the installation of roof lights. Carrot Hill Farmhouse, Batcombe. Full Application. The application stated that in the original planning permission a ground source heat pump and water tanks were to be housed in the attic space of the house but noise issues led to the decision to site the equipment in a new timber clad building. The Council decided to recommend refusal on the grounds that the justification for the large size of the house was the combination of the footprint of the previous modest house with that of the various outbuildings and that therefore the erection of new outbuildings should not be allowed.

Planning Application Updates.

Listed Building Consent had been granted for the rebuilding of the garden boundary wall at Laburnum Cottage.

4202 – Precept Capping Consultation: The Clerk reported that the Government were running a consultation on the 2017/18 Local Government Finance Settlement that included a proposal that the precept capping principle is extended to the largest town and parish councils. However, depending on the response to the consultation, the Government stated that it was prepared to extend the precept capping principle to all parish councils. The proposed level of the cap for the large parish councils was 2% or £5 (on a Band D precept) whichever was the larger. It was noted that for small parish councils a modest increase in their precept could exceed the cap triggering a referendum which could cost the council as much as the original increase. The Somerset Association of Local Councils felt that as many parish councils as possible should respond to the consultation and had forwarded guidance from the National Association of Local Councils. It was agreed to delegate a response to the Clerk in line with the guidance provided.

4203 – Accounts Software: The Clerk had prepared an evaluation of the Scribe 2000 Accounts software that indicated that any time savings from using the software were likely to be minimal and therefore the cost of the licence at £195 a year did not represent good value for money. It was agreed not to renew the licence.

4204 – Clerk's Contract of Employment: The Clerk's Contract of Employment stated that he be paid quarterly at the first Council meeting of the following quarter (held on the first

Wednesday of the month). This created the possibility of two payments in the same tax quarter (ending on the 5th of the month) with consequent problems with HMRC's online PAYE system. It was agreed to amend the Contract of Employment so that the Clerk would be paid "by cheque at quarterly intervals at the next Council meeting after the last working day of June, September, December and March or on the 6th day of the following month, whichever is the later."

4205 - Authorisation of payment: Councillors authorised the following payments:

- £109.00 Gardens of Avalon – Grass and hedge cutting in September.
- £120.00 Grant Thornton UK LLP – Audit fee.
- £1,083.48 The Clerk – Salary for 2nd Quarter plus additional hours worked in 2015/16.
- £98.12 The Clerk – Expenses for 2nd Quarter.

4206 - Other Business - Matters of Information Only: In response to a question from Iona FitzGerald, the Clerk reported that the new notice boards had not yet been purchased.

4207 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 2nd November at 7.30pm in the Old School Rooms, Batcombe.

Chris Wildridge
2nd November 2016