

# BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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## You are Summoned to the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council to be held on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2017 at 7.30pm 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 Meeting held on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2016** to be agreed and signed.  
*Enclosed.*

**5. Matters Arising – information updates only.**

*None that do not appear on 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**

**Proposal for a One Way System for Back Lane** – *Mr Niall Warry of Westcombe is proposing that the Parish Council request that Somerset Highways introduce a one way system for Back Lane from the junction with the road past The Three Horseshoes to the junction with Kale Street. He suggests that this section of Back Lane be one way, while the traffic on Gold Hill remains two way. He also suggests a similar arrangement for the road past the Round House at the other end of Back Lane. The Parish Council would need to consult with Somerset Highways and with local residents, who may be concerned at additional road signage.*

*The Chairman to report on any response from the County Councillor to the concerns raised over the removal of Batcombe from the pre-salting network.*

*The County Council have informed us that the A359 will be closed at Wanstrow on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2017 for one night from 10.00pm to 6.00am to enable bridge examination works.*

## **8. Playground**

**Maintenance Report** – *The moles remain very active. More broken glass from drinks bottles was removed from the Playing Field with the help of a local resident, who had brought children to the Field. This time the glass was in the bus shelter and on its roof.*

*A decision on the grass cutting contract for next season was deferred from the last meeting. Mr Sparkes of Gardens of Avalon has provided a quote for cutting the grass in the Playing Field which is the same as this year - £50 a cut for the Playing Field and £9 for the area around the phone box. He is unable to do a cut every ten days as this would change the day for every visit, creating problems for his work diary. He would be willing to cut the Playing Field every Tuesday, just missing a week if it was raining heavily on the Tuesday. If the Council agreed to this he wouldn't charge for cutting the grass around the telephone box. Mr Sparkes would like the Council to agree to a condition that he is to be left alone to complete his work without intrusion from other works in the Playing Field. Councillors should be aware that agreeing to a weekly cut to the Playing Field grass will add approximately £800 to the grass cutting bill and will impact on the precept set – item 11 below.*

*We understand the remedial works to the play equipment will be undertaken by Mainstay Projects in the new year. The Council will then need to apply wood preservative to the equipment.*

## **9. Planning Applications:**

None at present.

### **Planning Application Updates.**

*The application to remove the planning condition preventing the barn conversion at Batcombe Lodge from being sold separately from the main building went to the Planning Board meeting on December 21<sup>st</sup>. The Parish Council had recommended refusal but the case officer recommended approval. The Chairman to report on the meeting.*

## **10. Affordable Housing**

*The Parish Council has decided to invite local landowners to offer suitable land for affordable housing. To consider how this is to be done.*

## **11. Annual Parish Meeting**

*The Annual Parish Meeting is due to be held on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> April at 7.30pm in the Jubilee Hall. The Council needs to consider whether it wishes to invite a speaker to this meeting.*

## **12. Budget and Precept 2017/18**

*Batcombe's tax base for 2017/18 is 212.10, which has been revised to 207.86 to allow 2% for uncollectable Council Tax. [The tax base is the number of Band D equivalent properties in Batcombe when taking into account the number of empty properties, various discounts (including 25% for single people) and the weighting of the different bands above and below Band D.]*

*Batcombe's tax base for 2016/17 was 201.19 and a larger tax base means that each household has to pay less Council Tax to provide the same precept for the Parish Council. If the Parish Council were to leave its precept unchanged at £8,450, a Band D property with no discounts would have to pay £40-65 towards the precept in 2017/18 a reduction of 3.21% on this year.*

*If, as suggested at the November meeting, the Council increases its precept by £300 to £8,750 (an increase of 3.55% in the precept), a Band D property with no discounts would have to pay £42.10 towards the precept, an increase of just 0.23%. Please note that it is this figure that appears on Council Tax bills.*

*The tax base appears to be fluctuating from year to year – up one year and down the next. The Parish Council may therefore wish to increase the precept by more this year and less next year to even out the increases in Council Tax. An increase of £500 in the precept to £8,950 (an increase of 5.92% in the precept) would result in a Band D property with no discounts paying £43.06, an increase of 2.52%.*

*SALC have informed us that the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) have decided not to apply referendum principles to the parish council sector for 2017/18 (this would mean having a referendum if the increase in our precept was above a certain level). However DCLG expect town and parish councils to “demonstrate restraint when setting increases”.*

*Details of the Budget for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 and a forecast for the years 2016-2020 were provided with the Agenda for November’s meeting. Please bring your copy of the budget and forecast to this meeting. These can be downloaded from the Parish Council website – under meeting papers for the November meeting and there will be some additional copies at the January meeting.*

*Most items in the budget were agreed in November. The exception being the cost of the grass cutting in the Playing Field. If the Council agree to a weekly cut this will cost an estimated additional £800 a year. As we are budgeting a surplus in 2017/18 this increase could be phased in over two years – with an extra £400 on the precept in each year. This would mean a precept of £9,150 for 2017/18 (an increase of £700 on 2016/17) and a forecast increase of £650 in 2018/19. An increase of £700 in the precept to £9,150 (an increase of 8.28% in the precept) would result in a Band D property with no discounts paying £44.02, an increase of 4.81%.*

### **13. Administration**

*When the Clerk reported that he had set up a dedicated e-mail address for the Parish Council at the September meeting, it was suggested that a free e-mail account such as g-mail would allow the same e-mail address to be used should there be a change of Clerk. It should be noted that the “free” g-mail service is paid for by targeted advertising, as a result of Google scanning your e-mails; and that only personal g-mail accounts are free with g-mail for work being charged a fee. Consequently, there doesn’t appear to be a strong case for setting up a g-mail account that would still be a personal account of the Clerk’s. As a result, the Chairman feels the Council should set up a non-personal e-mail account. The Clerk will seek to determine the options and costs before the meeting, but it may be sensible to defer a decision to the next meeting, so that these can be considered beforehand.*

### **14. Authorisation of Payment**

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

£967.51 The Clerk – Salary for 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter. (*See enclosed sheet.*)

£97.28 The Clerk – Expenses for 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter. (*See enclosed sheet.*)

### **15. Other Business – matters of information only.**

*The District Council has adopted a Street Trading policy which requires anyone wishing to sell something in a “street” to obtain a consent from the District Council. Should someone apply for a consent to sell in Batcombe, the District Council will consult the Parish Council.*

*The Police and Crime Commissioner has sent the Parish Council a copy of the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Plan setting out priorities for the police, community safety and criminal justice services for the next four years. The Plan will be available at the meeting for anyone interested.*

### **16. Date and Time of Next Meeting:**

Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2017 at 7.30pm in the Old School Rooms, Batcombe.

*Rob Sage*

Rob Sage – Clerk

28<sup>th</sup> December 2016