

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 7th December 2016 in the Jubilee Hall, Batcombe, commencing at 7.30pm.

Present - Councillors: Chris Wildridge – Chairman, Jayne Cox, Lucinda Edgell, Iona FitzGerald, Ian Sage and Justin Witcombe.

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage, Dick Skidmore – District Councillor, John Lapwood – Village Agent and three members of the public.

The Chairman expressed his thanks to Jo Webber for allowing the Parish Council to use the Jubilee Hall in place of her yoga class as the Old School was otherwise occupied.

4223 – Apologies for Absence: John Sommer, who was attending a family engagement.

4224 – Declarations of Interest: None.

4225 – Public Participation: John Lapwood introduced himself as the Village Agent for Batcombe appointed by the Community Council for Somerset. The post was funded by lottery money and he covered 16 villages, working 12 hours a day. He offered a signposting service, helping to direct people to the support and services they needed.

4226 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 2nd November 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4227 – Matters Arising: None.

4228 – District and County Councillors' Reports: The District Councillor reported that the District Council was struggling on, with the amalgamation of services with other Districts taking place to save on costs. The District Council was concerned to retain employment in the District and needed sites for employers.

4229 – Allotments: The Clerk reported that payment of the allotment rent had been received from the five continuing allotment holders (one of whom held two allotments). A tenancy agreement and rent had been received from one new allotment holder and there was interest in two further allotments which if taken up would leave one vacant allotments. It was suggested that a note be included in the parish magazine that the allotments would be suitable for someone from Upton Noble given their location at Eastcombe.

4230 – Footpaths and Highways: The Clerk reported that Somerset Highways had not yet sent out their Winter Service leaflet, but that the pre-salting map for 2016/17 was available on the Snow and Ice page of the County Council's website and indicated that they would be salting the road from Evercreech to Westcombe (as far as the junction with the lane to Spargrove) but not through Westcombe or onto Batcombe.

The Chairman noted that he had met with the County Councillor in July and shown him how steep the roads into and out of Batcombe were. On discovering that the salting would stop on the edge of Westcombe he had e-mailed the County Councillor to inform him that this was not acceptable and he was sure the County Councillor was working to get this sorted. If not, it

would be up to residents to write to the County Councillor and the MP. The District Councillor felt that e-mails to the County Councillor would be more effective than letters to the MP.

Justin Witcombe had collected 10 bags of 20kg of de-icing materials from the Highways Depot in Frome. While there he had spoken to drivers about the problems in getting through Kale Street, and they had complained that residents that spoken aggressively to drivers trying to get past their parked vehicles. The Clerk reported a request from a resident for a salt bin to be placed on the corner by Conduit Cottage.

The Parish Council had been informed that Kale Street would be closed for two days from 12th December 2016 to allow the laying of BT ducting in this road.

The Chairman reported that another HGV had entered Back Lane after leaving the A361 at Leighton and coming down Cockpit Lane. A further lorry had been stuck outside the Church. The Clerk to report these incidents to Somerset Highways.

Concern was raised about the potholes at the bottom of Snakelake Hill on the road to Bruton. The culvert under the road had become blocked during the recent heavy rain causing the road to flood and producing one very large hole in the road, two smaller potholes and a bank of gravel. The large hole had been filled and the gravel removed but the remaining large potholes had been left, marked but unfilled. The Clerk to contact the South Somerset Office of Somerset Highways.

Justin Witcombe noted that there had been complaints about the road repairs at Churchbridge Lodge. It was reported that the overhanging branches on Westcombe Hill would be dealt with.

The Clerk noted that the Public Path Diversion Order for the Restricted Byway SM 2/1 away from the residential dwellings at Lodge Farm had been confirmed.

4231 – Planning Applications: Planning Application Nos: 2016/2705/HSE and 2016/2706/LBC – Extension to existing residential building. Donegal Cottage, Kale Street, Batcombe. Householder Application and Listed Building Consent. The architect for the applicant was in attendance and willing to answer queries but no issues were raised. It was felt the conservation officer might have a concern but there were no objections from Councillors to the proposed extension and so the Council recommended approval. The District Councillor noted that the neighbours had no problems with what was proposed.

4232 – Playing Field: The Clerk reported that the moles remained active in the Playing Field. An offer to catch the moles had been received at a cost of £20 per mole. It was felt that rolling the Playing Field and using mole scarers would be more effective. It was suggested that the rolling would be done in March and the Chairman asked that this be included on the Agenda for the March meeting.

The Clerk reported that he had turned off the water in the Playing Field and thanked Justin Witcombe for draining the exposed pipes in the bus shelter. The Clerk reported finding more broken glass from a coke bottle behind the bus shelter. It was agreed to continue monitoring the situation.

Mr Sparkes of Gardens of Avalon had provided a quote for cutting the grass in the Playing Field at the same price as the current season. He was unable to undertake a cut every ten days as this would create problems for his work diary, but offered to undertake a cut every week. It was noted that this would add approximately £800 to the grass cutting bill and it was decided

to defer a decision to the January meeting. Mr Sparkes also asked the Parish Council to agree to a condition that he be left alone to complete his work without intrusion from other works.

The Clerk reported that he had written to Anthony Greenhalgh of Mainstay Projects thanking him for his offer of remedial work on the play equipment and confirming the points raised at the previous meeting. No work had been undertaken at the time of the meeting and Iona FitzGerald reported that it had been delayed by the Christmas rush but would take place after Christmas. It was confirmed that the wood preservative would be applied when this work was done.

4233 – Removal of Batcombe Telephone Kiosk: BT were proposing to remove the telephone kiosk in Batcombe as the phone had not been used for a year. There was no objection to the removal of the kiosk. Consideration was given to adopting the kiosk and using it as a notice board, but the current notice board by the kiosk was felt to be sufficient and as the kiosk was a modern replacement there was no heritage value in retaining it.

4234 – Planning Application Updates: The Clerk reported that confirmation had been received of the refusal of planning permission to convert and extend the stable at Crows Hill for use as holiday accommodation. The District Council had had no objection to the felling of the Ash tree in the Village Hall car park, and the demolition of the garage and retaining wall and erection of a utility room, cycle store and new retaining wall at The Cottage on Holly Hill had been approved.

4235 – Affordable Housing: The Chairman and Iona FitzGerald had attended a meeting at the Mendip District Council Offices with Nina Richards, the Housing Officer, and Matt Day from the Community Council for Somerset to consider the next step in the process of providing affordable housing. This would be a call to potential landowners willing to offer land for affordable housing to come forward. Any landowner coming forward would initially need to talk to the District Council and, if considered suitable, proposals would then come to the Parish Council. It was agreed to ask landowners to come forward by the end of March.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their contribution to the hamper for the prize draw for those taking part in the Housing Needs Survey. He felt that the parish meeting to consider the results of the Housing Needs Survey had been positive, with those attending supporting the aim of providing more affordable housing in the parish.

There was a brief discussion of possible sites for affordable housing and the number of houses that might be built. The Chairman volunteered to come up with a form of words to put in the parish magazine and the District Councillor offered to approach those who might be willing to offer some land.

4236 – Budget and Precept 2017/18: A decision on the precept for the year ending 31st March 2018 was deferred until the January meeting when the tax base for 2017/18 would be known.

4237 - Authorisation of payment: Councillors authorised the following payments:

£1,813.50	Community Council for Somerset – Housing Needs Survey - balance of cost.
£135.48	Read Agriservices – Concrete posts & struts for Playing Field fence repair.
£109.00	Gardens of Avalon – Grass and hedge cutting in November.
£71.17	The Parish News – Photocopying in 2015/16.
£104.20	Mendip Community Transport – Frome bus pilot in October.

4238 - Other Business - Matters of Information Only: It was noted that County Council elections would take place on 4th May 2017 and anyone interested in becoming a County Councillor could find out more by visiting www.somerset.gov.uk/elections.

It was also noted that the Boundary Commission were reviewing the boundaries of parliamentary constituencies and under initial proposals the constituency Somerton and Frome would be reduced in size by the removal of two wards to the north-west of Frome (Ammerdown and Coleford and Holcombe), reducing the population of the constituency from 77,797 to 72,417.

The Clerk reported that the total cost of the six week Frome Bus Pilot was £156.39 and that the level of use appeared to have remained fairly constant with a subsidy from the Councils supporting the scheme of 65% of the cost.

The Parish Council had been informed by the organiser of the Shindig Weekender that this would be taking place again at Gilcombe Farm on the weekend of May 26th-28th 2017. The organisers would be making a licence application to South Somerset District Council in late December and promised to send the Parish Council a copy of the event management plan in due course.

The Chairman reported that he had spoken to the property owner about the overhanging hedge at Westcombe Cottage, but found it difficult to see how it was causing a problem. The owner had asked that anyone complaining about the hedge informed her which part was causing a problem and it would be cut back.

4239 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 4th January 2017 at 7.30pm in the Old School Rooms, Batcombe.

Chris Wildridge
4th January 2017