

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

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You are Summoned to the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council to be held on Wednesday 1st February 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 Meetings held on Wednesdays 4th January and 18th January 2017 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

Stopping Up of the Public Highway to Lodge Farm – *The County Council has received an application to remove the highway rights (stop-up) from part of the highway at the approach to Lodge Farm, after the access to the bridleway. The Highway Service Manager is of the opinion that the area of highway in question is of no value to the public and recommends the stopping up proceeds. If the Parish Council and any other interested parties are happy with the proposal, the application will be advertised before going to the Magistrates' Court for the Order to be made.*

Presalting of the Road through Batcombe. *The Chairman to report on the latest response from the County Council to the concerns raised over the removal of Batcombe from the pre-salting network. A resident has reported problems with ice on Crows Hill, due to water flowing down the road.*

As noted at the last meeting, the County Council have informed us that the A359 will be closed at Wanstraw on Monday 13th February 2017 for one night from 10.00pm to 6.00am to enable bridge examination works.

8. Playground

Maintenance Report – *The moles remain active (40 molehills on January 21st) – to be considered at the next meeting. No more broken glass from drinks bottles has been found in the Playing Field to date.*

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, but is unable to do a cut every ten days as this would change the day for every visit, creating problems for his work diary. I have not yet received any suggestions for alternative contractors to provide a quote.

An offer has been received from a resident to provide a redundant garden play frame for the Playing Field. The Council will need to determine whether the frame is of a high enough standard for use in a public play area. It would also need to decide where the frame would go and whether safety surfacing would be required.

Mainstay Projects have not yet undertaken the promised remedial works to the play equipment.

9. Planning Applications:

None at present. Iona informs me that Cutting Edge Tree Care have put in two applications for tree works, but we have not been notified of these as yet. The works are to fell or pollard a willow at Pastoral on Linch Lane and to fell a Eucalyptus on Kale Street.

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 was re-submitted to the Planning Board meeting on January 18th. The application for an extension to Donegal Cottage in Kale Street has been withdrawn.

10. Batcombe War Memorial

Historic England (formerly English Heritage) are considering whether to recommend the War Memorial in Batcombe for listing. They have invited the Parish Council to comment on their consultation report. This is a question of checking their facts which I will do before the meeting.

Robert Jones has requested that the Parish Council as the “owner/authorised custodian” of the Batcombe War Memorial give authority for the addition of a name to War Memorial. The name is that of William John Newman, a private in the Somerset Light Infantry who was killed in August 1914. He had been born in Milton Clevedon and lived briefly in Westcombe (1901 Census) before moving to Bath and then Taunton. His brother George (killed in the same battle) appears on two memorials in Bath, but William apparently does not appear on any memorial in the UK. William’s grandson has said that he would like a commoration added to the Batcombe War Memorial.

Robert Jones states that he won’t be proposing a plan or making contact with the Conservation Officer at Mendip until the Parish Council has given its blessing but hopes the changes can be made in time for Remembrance Sunday 2017. He notes that the Council will need to consider whether this will create a precedent for the addition of other names. The Council needs to consider whether it needs to see detailed plans for the addition before giving approval; whether it should approach the Conservation Officer for his opinion given that the Memorial is likely to be listed in the near future; and whether it should consult the parish before any changes are agreed.

11. Annual Parish Meeting

A decision on a speaker for the Annual Parish Meeting on Wednesday 5th April was deferred from the last meeting.

12. Administration

The Clerk's Membership of the Society of Local Council Clerks. In previous years the Parish Council has paid for the Clerk's Membership of the SLCC, which is a profession body providing valuable resources and advice for Clerk. A small proportion of the SLCC's work was considered to be trade union activity (i.e. advising Clerks in dispute with their Council). To avoid the difficulties of being subject to trade union legislation the SLCC has created a separate body, the Association of Local Council Clerks, to undertake such activities. As a result, membership of the SLCC has been reduced by £10 to £78, with a separate membership fee of £10 for membership of the ALCC. The Parish Council to consider continuing to pay for membership of the SLCC. The Clerk should pay the membership of the ALCC.

Parish Council's e-mail address. There are a number of options to consider:

- i. continue using the Clerk's private e-mail address robsage@uwclub.net. This has proved satisfactory for the last fourteen years. Advantages – free and easy to use. Disadvantages – it is a private address rather than a Parish Council address and would need to be changed at a change of Clerk. Not a problem at the last change of Clerk, but potentially more so with the greater use of e-mail today.
- ii. use a separate address provided by the Clerk's e-mail provider batcombecp@uwclub.net. Advantages – free and a dedicated address for the Parish Council, allowing easy separation of Parish Council e-mails from other e-mails addressed to the Clerk. Disadvantages – while it allows continuity as a new Clerk can be provided with the password to access the account and use the e-mail, the address would eventually need to be changed in case the previous Clerk changed e-mail provider.
- iii. use a “free” g-mail address batcombecp@gmail.com. Advantages – free and a dedicated address for the Parish Council. Disadvantages – only personal g-mail address are free, meaning it would still be a personal account of the Clerk.
- iv. use an e-mail address provided by the Parish Council website, e.g. clerk@batcombe-parish-council-somerset.org.uk Advantages – no additional cost (included with website hosting) and a dedicated address for the Parish Council that can be transferred to a new Clerk. Disadvantages – e-mails are sent to the Clerk's private e-mail address and responses come back from that address. In addition the 1&1 website has to be paid for by the Clerk and re-imbursed, which may create issues during the transfer to a new Clerk. (And the address is a bit cumbersome.)
- v. create a business mail account with 1&1, the providers of the Parish Council website at a cost of £4.99 a month per mailbox. Advantages – dedicated “real” e-mail address for the Parish Council that can be transferred to a new Clerk. Disadvantages – cost and from previous experience with 1&1, payment will need to be paid for by the Clerk and re-imbursed, creating issues with the transfer to a new Clerk.
- vi. create an e-mail account with another provider that will take payment from the Parish Council rather than the Clerk, with the option of a .gov.uk address, e.g. clerk@batcombecp.gov.uk Advantages – professional, dedicated address for the Parish Council that can easily be transferred to a new Clerk. Disadvantages – cost. I have asked for a quote for providing a .gov.uk domain name and for e-mail hosting from a company that contacted me but have not had a response yet. I expect the cost will be higher than 1&1.

13. Bank Reconciliation and Budget Update

The bank reconciliation for the third quarter to 31st December to be verified by the Vice Chairman before the meeting and reported to the Council.

An update on the budget as at the end of December for the current year is enclosed. The first column shows the actual accounts for last year. The second column is the budget for this year as agreed in

January last year. The third column is the receipts and payments to the end of December and the fourth column a projection of the position at the end of the year. The expected variations against budget are largely unchanged since the last budget update but are listed below.

Receipts are projected to be approximately £1,000 more than the budgeted figure because of the donations of £1,081 for the war memorial wall repairs. It is likely that there will be a vacant allotment at the end of the year reducing the rent received.

Playing Field expenditure is likely to be £1,000 more than the budgeted figure because of the repair to the zip wire (expected to have been paid in the previous year), the cost of the fencing repair, and the additional safety inspection following repairs to the play equipment.

The projection for the expenditure on Administration is £350 under budget. Although an additional £115 was paid to the Clerk (for extra hours) and the Audit fees of £120 were not budgeted (the grants received took receipts over the £10,000 limit at which fees are charged) - the purchase of the Parish Council laptop and software was budgeted for £500 in this year but actually purchased at the end of last year, and it was decided not continue with the accounts software.

The projection for the expenditure on Other items is £3,300 more than the budgeted figure because of additional expenditure on the allotments; the cost of the Frome bus pilot; the repair to the War Memorial wall being £1,000 more than budgeted (paid for by donations); purchasing two new notice boards instead of repairing the one at Westcombe; and the remaining £1,813.50 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 £3,470 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 £4,400 – only £380 lower than the expected figure when the budget was made. It should be noted that approximately £1,100 of these funds will be earmarked for the allotments.

14. Authorisation of Payment

£78.00 Society of Local Council Clerks - Clerk's Membership.

£21.16 SSE - Electricity Supply to Playing Field.

15. Other Business – matters of information only.

Shindig Weekend at Gilcombe Farm – The Parish Council was notified of an application for a licence for the Shindig Weekend event at Gilcombe Park on the weekend of May 26th to May 28th. The deadline for representations was January 18th and so the Clerk responded in line with previous policy asking that the same/similar conditions to those imposed in previous years be applied. This the second year that the Shindig event has taken place at Gilcombe Farm and the organisers appear happy to accept the conditions imposed last year. The organisers have sent me a copy of their Event Management Plan (171 pages) which includes a noise management plan.

Mendip Empty Homes Strategy Consultation – The District Council have sent a draft copy of their Empty Homes Strategy which is out for consultation to February 10th. The strategy seeks to bring empty homes back into use by a variety of means.

Joint Torr Works and Coleman Quarry Liaison Group – The Parish Council has not had a representative on this Group since Liz Hollis stood down at the last election. The next meeting will be on Wednesday 22nd March at 5.30pm. The Group considers quarry development and operations issues, planning and environment issues and liaison with members of the public. I have a copy of the Minutes of the last meeting in October for anyone interested.

Mobile Phone Mast – A local resident reports being approached by a company to see if they would be willing to have a 17.5m mobile phone mast erected on their land.

16. Date and Time of Next Meeting:

Wednesday 1st March 2017 at 7.30pm in the Old School Rooms, Batcombe.

Rob Sage

Rob Sage – Clerk

25th January 2017