

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 1st February 2017 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 7.30pm.

Present - Councillors: Chris Wildridge – Chairman, Lucinda Edgell, Iona FitzGerald, Ian Sage and John Sommer.

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

4260 – Apologies for Absence: Jayne Cox and Justin Witcombe, due to ill children, Dick Skidmore – District Councillor

4261 – Declarations of Interest: None.

4262 – Public Participation: Peter Glaisher asked if there had been a response to the call for offers of land to provide the affordable housing. The Chairman noted that there had been no response yet to the article in the parish magazine and those in a position to offer land may be approached individually. The Chairman also noted that the end of March deadline for responses was not fixed in stone.

4263 – Minutes of the Meetings held on Wednesdays 4th January and 18th January 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4264 – Matters Arising: None.

4265 – District and County Councillors' Reports: None.

4266 – Footpaths and Highways: Stopping Up of the Public Highway to Lodge Farm. The County Council had 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 restricted byway. Provided access to the restricted byway was not affected, the Parish Council was happy with the proposal.

Presalting of the Road through Batcombe. The Chairman reported that he had invited the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the County Council to visit Batcombe but had had no response. He had seen a copy of a report from Somerset Highways stating that the road should never have been salted as there were no dwellings on it at an altitude higher than 500ft. The Chairman noted that there were no dwellings on the road from Stoney Stratton to Westcombe at this altitude. It was noted that Batcombe had been made a special case in the past because of the steep inclines on every road into the village. The Chairman noted that the roads were very dangerous in icy weather and someone had already driven into the hedge on Hincombe Hill next to the drop into Pughs Bottom Farm. He had told the County Council that it would be very difficult to explain a fatal accident involving the school bus. Parishioners were asked to e-mail and send letters to the County Councillor and his contact details would be added to the Batcombe Facebook page.

4267 – Playing Field: The problems caused by the continuing activities of the moles in the Playing Field – 40 molehills counted one day - would be discussed at the March meeting. It

was hoped that rolling the Field would solve the problem – if not a molecatcher would be employed. The Clerk reported that no more broken glass had been found in the Playing Field.

No alternative contractors with the necessary public liability insurance had been suggested and so it was agreed to re-appoint Gardens of Avalon on the existing basis of a fortnightly cut and to look for another contractor to do extra cuts if needed.

A playframe had been offered to the Parish Council for the Playing Field by a local resident. It was noted that the playframe was not of the required standard for a public play area and so could not be accepted.

Iona FitzGerald reported that Mainstay Projects had been unable to undertake the remedial work on the play equipment as yet due to the wet and cold weather.

4268 – Planning Applications: None.

Planning Application Updates: The application to remove the condition preventing the barn conversion at Batcombe Lodge from being occupied separately from the main house had been resubmitted to the Planning Board in January and the Chairman reported that a proposal by the District Councillor to prevent the barn conversion being sold separately from the rest of the property had been defeated by the intervention of a Councillor from another ward. As a result there were now no restrictions on the occupation of the barn conversion.

The application for an extension to Donegal Cottage in Kale Street had been withdrawn. The Chairman noted that this was due to the concerns of the Conservation Officer to the proposal.

4269 – Batcombe War Memorial: Robert Jones had requested that the Parish Council as the owner/authorised custodian of the Batcombe War Memorial give authority for the addition of a name to the War Memorial. The name was that of William John Newman, a private in the Somerset Light Infantry, killed in August 1914, who had been born in Milton Clevedon and lived in Westcombe as a child. His name does not apparently appear on any memorial in the UK, and his grandson would like a commemoration added to the Batcombe War Memorial.

Robert Jones had further proposed that the Batcombe War Memorial be cleaned and repaired at the same time and that the Westcombe War Memorial should also be cleaned and repaired. The Parish Council agreed in principle to the adding of William Newman's name and to the repair and cleaning of the War Memorial subject to detailed proposals and costings. The Chairman proposed the setting up of a Working Party to liaise with Robert Jones as the Parish Council could claim back the VAT if it undertook the work. This was agreed subject to Robert Jones' agreement and Lucinda Edgell volunteered to be the Parish Council representative on the Working Party.

The Chairman proposed that the Parish Council investigate whether it could formally adopt the War Memorial at Westcombe, whose ownership was unclear. The Clerk to contact Somerset Highways.

The Clerk reported that Historic England (formerly English Heritage) were considering the listing of the Batcombe War Memorial and gave details of the consultation report produced by Historic England. The Parish Council were happy to support the listing of the War Memorial.

Ian Sage gave his apologies and left the meeting at this point.

4270 – Annual Parish Meeting: This would take place on Wednesday 5th April. Iona FitzGerald suggested a speaker from the Somerset Wildlife Trust and was asked to see if this could be arranged.

4271 – Administration: The Clerk’s Membership of the Society of Local Council Clerks. The Clerk reported that to avoid being subject to trade union legislation the SLCC had created a separate body, the Association of Local Council Clerks, to undertake activities such as supporting a Clerk in dispute with their Council. As a result, membership of the SLCC had been reduced by £10 to £78, with a separate £10 fee for membership of the ALCC. The Parish Council agreed to continue paying for membership of the SLCC, with the Clerk to pay that of the ALCC.

Parish Council’s e-mail address. The Clerk had listed a number of options for the Council to consider. A local resident had suggested another alternative and so it was agreed to defer a decision to the next meeting to allow time for this option to be considered.

4272 – Bank Reconciliation and Budget Update: The Vice Chairman confirmed that he had verified the bank reconciliation for the 3rd Quarter that had been prepared by the Clerk.

A statement of receipts and payments comparing the budget for the current year with a projection based on receipts and payment to date had been distributed with the Agendas. The variations against budget were listed on the Agenda notes for Councillors and were largely unchanged since the last budget update.

4273 - Authorisation of payment: Councillors authorised the following payments:

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| £78.00 | Society of Local Council Clerks – Clerk’s membership. |
| £21.16 | SSE – Electricity supply to the Playing Field. |
| £23.46 | Water2business – Water supply to the Playing Field. |

4274 - Other Business - Matters of Information Only: Shindig Weekend at Gilcombe Farm – The Parish Council had been notified of a premises licence application for this event at Gilcombe Park on the weekend of May 26th to May 28th. The deadline for representations had been January 18th and so the Clerk had responded in line with previous policy asking that similar conditions to those imposed in previous years be applied. The Parish Council agreed that this representation could be withdrawn as the organisers had agreed to the conditions imposed on the same event last year and this would avoid the necessity of a hearing. The organisers had provided the Parish Council with a copy of their Event Management Plan.

Mendip Empty Homes Strategy Consultation – The District Council had sent a draft copy of their Empty Homes Strategy. The Parish Council supported the strategy which sought to bring empty homes back into use by a variety of means.

Joint Torr Works and Coleman Quarry Liaison Group – The Parish Council had not had a representative on this Group since Liz Hollis stood down at the last election. The Group considered quarry development and operations issues, planning and environment issues and liaison with members of the public. It was considered unnecessary to send a representative.

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

Notice Boards – In response to a question regarding the delay in the purchase of the new notice boards, the Clerk reported that this was initially due to the need to obtain the permission of the Parochial Church Council to replace the notice board on the churchyard wall. When this was obtained in July, the ordering of the notice boards was overlooked and the Clerk apologised for this. The notice boards proposed for the churchyard wall and at Westcombe were no longer available and so it was agreed to purchase slightly smaller notice boards coloured black and to fix a board to the notice board posts in Westcombe so that a

cheaper wall mounted notice board could be used. The Clerk to check the Church would be happy with a black notice board on the churchyard wall.

4275 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 1st March 2017 at 7.30pm in the Old School Rooms, Batcombe.

Chris Wildridge
1st March 2017