

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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You are Summoned to the Annual Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council to be held on Wednesday 3rd May 2017 at 7.30pm in the Jubilee Hall, 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. Election of Chairman & Chairman's Acceptance of Office

This item should be chaired by the current Chairman.

2. Election of Vice Chairman

The main role of the Vice Chairman is to chair meetings of the Parish Council when the Chairman is absent. John Sommer has indicated that he does not wish to continue as Vice Chairman.

3. Apologies and Acceptance of Reasons for Absence

This is necessary as any member who is absent for six months, without the Council accepting their reasons for absence, automatically loses their seat on the Council.

4. Filling of the Parish Council Vacancy by Co-option and Acceptance of Office

As no bye-election was claimed, the vacancy on the Parish Council resulting from the resignation of Lucinda Edgell can be filled by co-option. The vacancy has been advertised on the website, in the parish magazine and on the notice boards. Two people have expressed an interest in serving on the Parish Council.

The co-option has to be agreed by a vote of the current Council. The correct procedure is for the Chairman to call for nominations and for current Councillors to nominate persons who are willing to be co-opted. (It may be that not all persons expressing an interest are nominated - equally not expressing a written interest does not prevent someone being nominated if they are willing to serve.) If only one person is nominated the Council still has to vote on the co-option.

If there is more than one person nominated, our Standing Orders allow for a paper ballot of Councillors. If more than two people are nominated and no one obtains more than 50% of the votes, the person with the least number of votes is dropped from the list and a new vote is taken. This process is repeated until someone receives more than 50% of the votes. The Chairman then declares them to be co-opted. If the newly co-opted Councillor signs their Declaration of Acceptance of Office they take their place on the Council immediately. If the person co-opted is not present the Council should pass a resolution allowing them to sign their Declaration of Acceptance before the next meeting. If the person co-opted does not sign their Declaration of Acceptance their co-option is invalid.

To avoid embarrassment the Chairman will give any candidates present the option of leaving the room while the vote takes place. It should, however, be noted that the vote has to take place in public and that the candidates are entitled to be present if they wish.

5. Declarations of Interest

*It is the Councillors' responsibility to declare any interests they may have in any item on the Agenda. If you are uncertain please ask the Clerk before the meeting. **Please note** that the District Council's Monitoring Officer has stated that where a Councillor has a pecuniary interest in an item they cannot take part in any discussion on that item. This includes making a statement on the matter before leaving the room.*

6. 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.

7. Minutes of Meeting held on Wednesday 5th April 2017 to be agreed and signed. *Enclosed.*

8. Matters Arising – information updates only.

Thanks to Ian Sage, Justin Witcombe and John Sommer for erecting the new notice board on the churchyard wall. Positive comments about the notice board have been received. The notice board in Westcombe has been repaired, painted and replaced by Peter Glaisher.

9. 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.

10. Affordable Housing

No other offers of land for the affordable housing have been made other than that in Westcombe.

11. Allotments

The Chairman to report on a meeting with the allotment holders. There is currently one vacant allotment.

12. Footpaths and Highways

Nothing to report at present.

13. Batcombe War Memorial

The Chairman to report on progress on the proposal to add a name to the memorial and clean and repair it at the same time.

14. Playground - Maintenance Report.

The annual inspection of the Playing Field by RoSPA will take place in June. Thanks to Justin for organising the rolling of the Playing Field, the surface of which is much improved. However, instead of discouraging the moles, this appears to have encouraged them to be more active. Justin has also replaced the latch on the vehicle gate and found the padlock in the Playing Field, so the gate is now locked.

As reported at the last meeting the price quoted by Mendip Signs for a "No Dogs" sign similar to the one on the Wanstrow Playing Field gate is £25. This is very similar to the price for a similar sign from the Stocksigns catalogue.

Jane Batchelor and Jo Addison have begun work on the willow structures in the Playing Field, weaving the willow where possible and removing shoots that are



likely to pose a danger to children's eyes. Removing more shoots than essential at this time of year would encourage more growth so should wait until later in the year. They may need help with the highest branches.

Remedial Work to Play Equipment – options to be considered. *Mainstay Projects have yet to undertake the promised remedial work to the play equipment and so the Parish Council needs to consider the next steps to be taken. No playbark has yet been ordered this year.*

15. Planning Applications: None.

Planning Application Updates.

An application for a replacement dwelling at Batcombe Park (Valley View Farm) (Ref: 2017/0373/FUL) was withdrawn before an extraordinary meeting of the Parish Council could meet to consider it.

16. Appointment of Staffing Committee

Our Standing Orders require the appointment of a Staffing Committee. This Committee would consider any complaints against or grievances by the Clerk and conduct an annual review with Clerk. The Committee should consist of three Councillors so that any appeal could be considered by the remaining Councillors. (As relatives of the Clerk, Ian Sage and Jayne Cox should not be members of this committee.)

17. Appointment of Village Hall and Heritage Room Representatives

The Council appoints a representative to the Village Hall Trust Committee. Currently this is Justin Witcombe.

The Council has appointed the Clerk as its representative to help run the Heritage Room. This appointment should be confirmed, unless a Councillor wishes to take on this role. There are three Trustees running the Heritage Room (one each from the Village Hall Trust, the PCC and the Parish Council) and the role involves a commitment to open the Heritage Room on a Saturday afternoon and assist those inquiring about the history of the parish and its former inhabitants.

18. Arrangements for Review of Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Other Matters

Standing Orders require that the Council make arrangements at this meeting for the review of its Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Schedule of Assets, insurance cover, membership of other bodies, complaints procedure, procedures for handling requests made under the Freedom of Information Act, and policy for dealing with the press. I suggest the following timetable: Financial Regulations to be reviewed at the June meeting; Standing Orders to be reviewed at the July meeting; and the Schedule of Assets, Risk Management Policy and insurance cover to be reviewed at the March meeting in time for the preparation of the Annual Report and renewal of the insurance. The Council's other policies were reviewed last year before the election and, unless there are changes to the models on which they are based, I suggest these do not need to be reviewed until the year before the next Parish Council election in 2019.

19. Insurance Renewal

Although it was reported at the last meeting that the current long term agreement was coming to an end this year, in fact the Council agreed a new long term agreement with Came and Company last year and this has two years to run. Came and Company have now yet informed us that the premium for this year will be £280 (£273.75 last year). The increase is due to the index linking of the sums insured which have increased by 2%.

20. Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31st March 2017

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

A copy of the Financial Statements is enclosed. The three columns show the previous year's figures, the budget for last year (which was set in the January of the previous year) and the actual figures for last year. The allotments rent was £50 less than budgeted because one allotment is vacant and two others were vacant for periods. Donations received for the repair to the War Memorial wall had not been budgeted for. As a result of the donations, receipts were £1,000 more than budgeted.

The cost of the grass cutting in the Playing Field was slightly more than budgeted due to the mild weather during the winter. The cost of the electricity supply was similar to the previous year but the cost of the water supply was higher due to the tap in the shelter being left running. The cost of maintenance was higher than budgeted - £216 was paid for Playbark and £594 for the repair to the zip wire. Materials for the repair of the damaged fencing cost £247. The repair to the zip wire was not budgeted as it has been expected to have been paid for in the previous year. Taking this into account maintenance was close to budget.

The Clerk's salary was slightly higher than budgeted because of payment for extra hours worked in the previous year. The Clerk's expenses were less than budgeted. The Clerk's membership of SLCC was paid for by the Clerk and reclaimed in his expenses this year and so doesn't appear in the 2016/17 Financial Statements. No training or publications were purchased, but audit fees were due because the grants received the previous year took the Council's income above £10,000. Photocopying was less than budgeted as the bill was not for a full year. Most other administration expenses were largely as budgeted.

The grants given by the Council were as budgeted and the expenditure on the allotments was £200 for the lease of the field and £160 was spent on hedge cutting and tidying up the allotments field. The repair to the War Memorial wall cost £1,075 more than budgeted as more extensive repairs were needed but the additional cost was met by donations received. The £156 spent on the Frome bus pilot was not budgeted. The balance of the cost of the Housing Needs Survey was also unbudgeted but paid for by the remainder of the grant from Awards for All received the previous year.

Details of the earmarked money for the allotments and the grants for different items are given on the back of the Financial Statement. At the end of the year there was £1,018 of allotments money of which £200 would pay for the lease of the field in May, leaving £818 until the rent is paid in November. At the end of the year the remainder of the Awards for All grant had been spent on the balance of the Housing Needs Survey, leaving £395 in grant money earmarked for new notice boards.

The net result of the variations against the budget given above is a deficit of £1,925 on the year instead of the budgeted deficit of £500. The deficit is largely due to the spending of the remaining £1,813 in grant money for the Housing Needs Survey received the previous year. At the end of the year the Parish Council had £5,954 in its funds, £1,170 more than anticipated in the budget. Of this £1,018 is set aside for the allotments and £395 for new notice boards. This means that the Parish Council has funds totalling £4,540 that are not earmarked for specific items. This should be a sufficient reserve to cover the possible cost of a by-election during the coming year (which is the most likely source of major unbudgeted expenditure). SALC recommend that a Parish Council has reserves of between one-third and two-thirds of its precept, which with the current precept means the reserves should be between £3,000 and £6,00.

The Annual Return, which has to be sent to the External Auditor by June 16th, does not need to be considered until the next meeting, by which time the internal auditor should have presented his report.

21. Update on Budget for Year Ending 31st March 2018

This year's precept of £8,450 has been received. As reported previously there is no Council Tax Support Grant this year. Last year it was £71.80. A VAT repayment of £258.98 for the year up to March 2017 has been claimed but not yet received.

Enclosed is an updated projection on this year's budget. The first column shows the actual figures for last year. The second column shows the budget for this year as agreed in January (It was agreed to increase the budget for grass cutting without specifying a figure so I have increased it by a similar figure to the increase in the precept). The third column is the updated projection for this year. Receipts are likely to be as budgeted, except that the allotments rent will be lower because there is one vacant allotment at present. The expected variations against budget for the payments are: internet security software for the laptop and the cost of the new notice board and the repair to the Westcombe notice board (covered by the grant for a new notice board).

This gives a projected surplus of £820 on the year – compared to a budgeted surplus of £1,275, which is due to the spending of notice board grant money expected to have been spent in the previous year. This gives funds of £6,775 at the end of the year of which £1,000 will be earmarked for the allotments.

Note: if Mainstay Projects are unable to do the promised remedial work to the play equipment the Council will need to consider what alternative options it wishes to take and to budget accordingly.

22. Update of Schedule of Assets

Attached is an updated Schedule of Assets following comments at the last meeting. It now includes the new notice board, the litter bin outside the Playing Field and two old filing cabinets located in the Clerk's home office.

23. Authorisation of Payment

Came & Company - £280.00 – Insurance premium.

T & E A Hollis - £200.00 – Rent of Allotments Field.

Mr G Sparkes (Gardens of Avalon) - £???.00 – Grass cutting in April (invoice not yet received).

24. Other Business – matters of information only.

Please note that the Parish Council cannot make decisions on items that do not appear on the Agenda – so matters raised under this item are for information only.

25. Dates of Future Meetings - Next Meeting: Wednesday 7th June 2017 at 8.00pm in the Old School.

Traditionally the Parish Council has met on the first Wednesday of the month. For 2017/2018, the suggested dates, to be confirmed at the meeting, are:

<i>7th June</i>	<i>5th July</i>	<i>2nd August</i>	<i>6th September</i>	<i>4th October</i>	<i>1st November</i>
<i>6th December</i>	<i>10th January</i>	<i>7th February</i>	<i>7th March</i>	<i>11th April</i>	<i>9th May</i>

You will note that three of the dates are on the second Wednesday of the month. Having the meeting on the second Wednesday in January avoids the Clerk having to prepare the Agenda over the Christmas weekend. Easter is on April 1st in 2018 which makes having a meeting on the first Wednesday in April difficult – the two bank holidays mean the Agenda would have to be distributed over a week in advance. If the April meeting is on the second Wednesday there is only three weeks to the first Wednesday in May with a lot of preparation needed for the Annual Parish Council Meeting, so I suggest both April and May's meetings are held on the 2nd Wednesday.

If this is agreed Wednesday April 11th would also be the date of the Annual Parish Meeting. The August meeting will only take place if required to consider planning applications. The Council normally meets at 8.00pm in the summer and at 7.30pm for the rest of the year.

Rob Sage