

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 3rd May 2017 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 7.30pm.

Present - Councillors: Chris Wildridge – Chairman, Jayne Cox, Ian Sage, and Justin Witcombe. John Sommer arrived at item 4316.

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

4306 – Election of Chairman and Chairman’s Acceptance of Office: Chris Wildridge was proposed by Justin Witcombe and seconded by Ian Sage. There being no other nominations, Chris Wildridge was duly elected and signed his Acceptance of Office.

4307 – Election of Vice Chairman: The election was deferred until the next meeting.

4308 – Apologies for Absence: Iona FitzGerald.

4309 – Public Participation: None.

4310 – Filling of Parish Council Vacancy by Co-option and Acceptance of Office: Two people had expressed an interest in serving on the Council. The Chairman asked for nominations and Mary Comley was nominated by Jayne Cox, and Anthony Slocombe was nominated by Justin Witcombe. Both nominees were given the opportunity to make a short statement to the Council; and were invited by the Chairman to leave the room, but declined. The vote was taken by a paper ballot in accordance with the Council’s Standing Orders and Mary Comley received a majority of the votes. The Chairman declared Mary Comley co-opted onto the Council and Mary signed her Acceptance of Office and took part in the remainder of the meeting.

4311 – Declarations of Interest: None.

4312 – Playing Field – Willow Structures: This item was brought forward with the agreement of the Council. Jane Batchelor reported that she and Jo Addison had spent four half days working on the willow structures in the Playing Field. Their focus had been on weaving and not on pruning and had worked on the seat canopy and the small tunnel. There remained a lot of growth on the highest part of the main willow structure that needed attention. Jane felt that the Parish Council needed to adopt a regular maintenance programme to keep the willow in check. Justin Witcombe thanked Jane and Jo for all their work and suggested approaching Iona and Tristram FitzGerald to deal with the highest growth.

4313 – Public Participation: None.

4314 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 5th April 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4315 – Matters Arising: Ian Sage, Justin Witcombe, John Sommer and the Clerk were thanked for erecting the new notice board on the churchyard wall. Peter Glaisher was thanked for repairing and painting the notice board in Westcombe.

4316 – District and County Councillors Reports: None.

4317 – Affordable Housing: John Sommer left the room for this item. It had been suggested that the Parish Council should approach the owner of land near Mill Lane that was considered suitable for affordable housing and it was further suggested that the Diocese of Bath & Wells be approached regarding the use of the glebe field. It was agreed that the Clerk should write to both the landowner and the Diocese after consultation with the Chairman.

4318 – Allotments: The Chairman reported on a meeting with six of the allotment holders. It was noted that the gate post on the entrance gate had rotted and needed replacing – the Clerk to contact the landowners. The hedge needed to be trimmed each year and it was agreed to do so before the end of the year. The allotment holders had requested a load of muck and Justin Witcombe would organise this.

4319 – Footpaths and Highways: Jayne Cox noted that the no right of way for vehicles signs for the Honeycliff bridleway had not yet been erected. Justin Witcombe and John Sommer reported that they were unable to open the interactive footpaths map for the area and would contact the Volunteers Co-ordinator to sort out the problem.

4320 – Batcombe War Memorial: The Chairman stated that he had received a progress report from Rob Jones concerning the proposal to add the name of William John Newman to the war memorial in Batcombe and to clean and repair the memorial at the same time. Rob Jones had approached a number of different firms for quotations and had received a variety of prices for different work considered necessary. The Parish Council confirmed that it was happy for Rob Jones to obtain a price for the appropriate work to be undertaken on the understanding that the cost would be met by grants and fundraising and that the Parish Council would have the final say on any work to be undertaken.

4321 – Playing Field: The moles had become more active since the rolling of the Playing Field. After some discussion, it was agreed not to trap the moles and not to discuss them again until November. The Clerk to send a formal thank you to Scrumpy Groundworks for providing the roller, which had significantly improved the surface of the Playing Field.

It was agreed to buy a “No Dogs” sign similar to the one on the Wanstrow Playing Field from Mendip Signs at a cost of £25.

Mainstay Projects were understood to be undertaking the remedial work to the play equipment that week. To be discussed at the next meeting.

4322 – Planning Applications: There were no applications to consider.

Planning Application Updates: The Chairman had called an extraordinary meeting to consider an application for a replacement dwelling at Batcombe Park (formerly Valley View Farm) before the expiry of deadline for residents’ comments. The application had been withdrawn before this meeting, which had then been cancelled. The Clerk reported receiving an application for extensions to Ravenswood in Westcombe too late to be considered at this meeting. The District Council had granted Listed Building Consent for the barn conversion at Elm House on Kale Street.

4323 – Appointment of Staffing Committee: This was deferred to the next meeting.

4324 – Appointment of Village Hall and Heritage Room Representatives: It was agreed that Justin Witcombe should continue as the Village Hall Representative and that the Clerk should continue as the Heritage Room Representative.

4325 – Arrangements for Review of Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Other Matters: It was agreed that the Financial Regulations would be reviewed at the June meeting, Standing Orders at the July meeting, and the Schedule of Assets, Risk Management Policy and insurance cover be reviewed at the March meeting. It was also agreed that the Council's other policies would be reviewed in the year leading up to the next Parish Council election.

4326 – Insurance Renewal: The Council had entered into a three-year agreement with Came & Company the previous year. The premium had increased by £6.25 to £280 as a result of the index linking of the sums insured.

4327 – Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31st March 2017: The bank reconciliation for the fourth quarter to 31st March 2017 was verified by the Vice Chairman and reported to the Council.

A copy of the financial statements had been distributed with the Agendas. The following notes were taken as having been read by Councillors. The allotments rent was £50 less than budgeted because one allotment was vacant and two others had been vacant for periods. Donations received for the repair to the War Memorial wall had not been budgeted for, and 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 as the tap in the shelter had been 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 did not 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 had taken 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 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.

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 was 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 was a deficit of £1,925 on the year instead of the budgeted deficit of £500. The deficit was 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 was set aside for the allotments and £395 for new notice boards. This meant that the Parish Council had funds totalling £4,540 that were not earmarked for specific items.

The Clerk noted that the Annual Return, which was sent to the External Auditor, did not need to be considered until the next meeting, by which time the internal auditor would have presented his report.

4112 – Update on Budget for Year Ending 31st March 2018: An updated projection on this year's budget had been enclosed with the Agendas and the following notes were taken as read. The Clerk reported that this year's precept of £8,450 has been received. There was 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 had been claimed but not yet received.

Receipts were likely to be as budgeted, except that the allotments rent would be lower because there was currently one vacant allotment. The expected variations against budget for the payments were: internet security software for the laptop; and the cost of the new notice board and repairs to the Westcombe notice board (covered by the grant for a new notice board).

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

4329 – Update of Schedule of Assets: A copy of the Schedule of Assets had been distributed with the Agendas. The Schedule had been updated in the light of comments at the previous meeting and by the inclusion of the new notice board, the litter bin by the Playing Field and two old filing cabinets located in the Clerk's office.

4330 - Authorisation of payment: Councillors authorised the following payments:

- £280.00 Came & Company – Insurance premium.
- £200.00 T & E A Hollis – Lease of allotments field.
- £109.00 Gardens of Avalon – Grass cutting for April.

4331 Other Business - Matters of Information Only: Justin Witcombe reported that the Cricket Club would be opening their renovated pavilion at the home game on May 21st.

4332 - Dates of Future Meetings: The following dates were agreed for the monthly meetings of the Parish Council during the coming year, most being the first Wednesday of the month:

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

The meetings in January, April and May would be on the 2nd Wednesday to avoid Christmas and Easter (and the May meeting being too close to the April one). The date in April would also be the date of the Annual Parish Meeting and the August meeting would only be held if there were planning applications to consider. The Council to meet at 8.00pm in the summer (June to October and 7.30pm the rest of the year).

Chris Wildridge
7th June 2017