

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 7th June 2017 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 8.00pm.

Present - Councillors: Chris Wildridge – Chairman, Mary Comley, Jayne Cox, Iona FitzGerald, Ian Sage, and John Sommer.

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

4333 – Apologies for Absence: Justin Witcombe; Dick Skidmore – District Councillor; and Nigel Hewitt-Cooper – County Councillor.

4334 – Declarations of Interest: None.

4335 – Public Participation: None.

4336 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 3rd May 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4337 – Matters Arising: Affordable Housing – the Clerk reported that the letter written to the Diocesan Board of Finance regarding the use of the glebe field for affordable housing had been acknowledged and passed to the Diocesan Secretary for the Board to consider. The local landowner who had been contacted about the land by Mill Lane had responded to state that he was not willing to sell the land for affordable housing.

War Memorial – Rob Jones had reported that as two of the contractors he had approached had advised against cleaning the war memorial (which could damage the stone), he had removed this item from the proposed work. He had contacted the Conservation Officer at Mendip to confirm that he was happy with the proposed work and had made an application for funding to the War Memorials Trust. The Chairman noted that he had reminded Rob Jones that the Parish Council would need to issue the order for work to be done and this could only be done when funds were available.

4338 – Election of Vice Chairman: There were no volunteers and so the election was deferred indefinitely. The Clerk noted that should the Chairman be absent the meeting would need to elect a chairman for that meeting.

4339 – Shindig Weekender Festival: The Clerk reported that several complaints had been received about noise levels on the Friday evening from the Shindig Festival at Gilcombe Park, taking place over the weekend of May 26th – May 28th. These were passed onto the organisers who had promised to address the issues and noises levels seemed much lower on subsequent evenings, although one further complaint had been received about noise on the Sunday evening. Louise Nicholson reported that her B& B guests had returned home early because of the noise. The Parish Council had received a request that it call for a review of the licence for the Shindig festival. The Clerk noted that the Festival applied for a new licence each year and the Parish Council could make a representation when the new licence was applied for. There was also likely to be a post-festival meeting with South Somerset District Council, which the Parish Council was normally invited to attend. It was agreed that the following points should be raised: the failure of the organisers to respond quickly enough on the Friday evening; the

weakness in monitoring and lack of reaction; the impact on local businesses; and parking issues from the festival.

4340 – Kale Street Stream – Pollution and Water Quality: It was agreed to bring this item forward. Concerns had been raised by a resident regarding pollution in the stream that runs parallel to Kale Street and was cluttered with silage bags and had poor water quality. The resident had reported these concerns to the Environment Agency. Bruno Cristofoli noted that concerns with the river were not new. He felt that local quarrying had reduced the level of water in the river, so that rubbish washed off the road when it rained remained there. He noted that waste water from his farmyard went into a collecting tank, and that the last time there had been a problem with pollution the source had turned out to be the septic tank for the Council houses. The Chairman felt that the only way to proceed was to wait for the results of the investigation by the Environment Agency.

4341 – Footpaths and Highways: It was agreed to bring the following item forward. Concerns had been raised by a resident regarding the impassibility of the footpath from Pugh's Bottom Farm to Eastcombe Lane. Jayne Cox noted that the footpath was covered with vegetation and boggy. The state of the footpath had been reported a year ago. Clare Haskins the County Council's Rights of Way Officer reported that there were no funds for improvements but there would be no objections to volunteers clearing the footpath. The Chairman noted that the Ramblers Association could get involved if there was a formal conversation between the Parish and County Councils. The Clerk to contact Clare Haskins.

4342 – Planning Applications: It was agreed to bring the following item forward. Planning Application No: 2017/1020/HSE - Erection of first floor and single storey extensions to existing single storey dwelling and recladding of existing building fabric; new single storey pool house; and car port. Ravenswood, Baileys Lane, Westcombe – Householder Application. The Clerk reported that although the case officer had allowed an extension of the consultation deadline for the Council to consider the application at this meeting, the District Council website showed that a decision had been made in favour of the application that day. The Chairman stated that he would be making a formal complaint and would contact the District Councillor and the Head of Planning at the District Council. He invited members of the public who wished to comment on the application to do so. The applicant declined to do so as a decision had already been made. Graham Sage stated that he had objected to the windows overlooking his property as Ravenswood was 8-10 feet higher than his property and this meant that his privacy was gone and his home devalued. Denis Bumford stated that he had not been notified of the application despite owning the paddock next to Ravenswood. He was concerned at using the footpath through Ravenswood as a drive for guest parking and had safety concerns about proposals for the access onto the main road through Westcombe.

4343 – District and County Councillors Reports: The County Councillor had e-mailed to say that he looked forward to meeting the Council and planned to attend one meeting in three due to clashes with other meetings.

4344 – Footpaths and Highways (continued) - Presalting of the Road through Batcombe: The Chairman stated that he hoped to arrange a meeting our County Councillor and the County Council portfolio holder for Highways to discuss the presalting of the road through Batcombe.

4345 – Planning Applications (continued):
Planning Application No: 2017/1190/LBC – Replacement windows.
Batcombe Lodge, Batcombe – Listed Building Consent.

The Parish Council recommended approval as there were no concerns about the proposal to replace the windows with similar replacements.

Planning Application Updates: The Clerk reported receiving an application for alterations to Spring Cottage too late to be considered at this meeting. To be considered at the next meeting if an extension to the deadline for consultations was granted.

4346 – Playing Field: Mainstay Projects had reported that the rot to the legs of the multiplay apparatus was not as bad as was feared – only an inch or so deep in the worst places. They had chiselled away the rotten wood and sealed the legs with rubberised paint. They had re-concreted the braces on the zip wire and painted them as well, although there was no rot on these. The Clerk to contact the insurers to see if it was acceptable for Ian Sage to replace the saddle unit before the inspection by RoSPA. Ian Sage was concerned that Mainstay Projects had just painted over rotten wood on the legs of the multiplay apparatus and that it would eventually become unsafe. The Clerk to contact Mainstay Projects to ask for a site meeting to discuss the problem.

The annual inspection of the Playing Field by RoSPA would take place in June and the Parish Council had paid an additional £42 to accompany the inspector on his visit. RoSPA would inform the Council of the date of the inspector's visit when he had arranging the dates for his inspections in June. It was agreed to purchase more playbark for the multiplay equipment and Ian Sage volunteered to collect it. The mole continued to be active but discussion was deferred until November.

The Clerk reported that the District Council had an agreement with their contractors iDverde to ensure that the litter bin by the Playing Field had 25% capacity at all times. It was suggested that the increased litter in the bin may have been a result of the builders working on the Church roof. The contractors had been informed of the need for more frequent emptying of the bin.

4347 – Review of Financial Regulations: Standing Orders require that the Parish Council's Financial Regulations are reviewed annually. It was agreed that no changes were needed to the Financial Regulations or to the various figures in the Regulations that were set by the Parish Council.

4348 – Review of the Effectiveness of the System of Internal Control: The Clerk reported his belief that the Council's system of internal control was more than sufficient for a small Parish Council. The details were given in the Financial Regulations and included the budgetary process, the authorisation of all payments by the Council, the signing of cheques at Council meetings by two Councillors, who have to initial the cheque stubs and invoices, the quarterly bank reconciliations and the internal audit undertaken by Mr Griff Williams, who was both competent and independent of the Council.

Copies of the Internal Auditor's Report completed by Griff Williams were enclosed with the Agendas. The Clerk reported that the Internal Auditor had no recommendations to make to the Council other than suggesting that an allotments rent book should be kept.

4349 – Annual Return Section 1 – Approval of Annual Governance Statement 2016//17: Copies of Section 1 of the Annual Return - the Annual Governance Statement - had been enclosed with the Agendas, together with copies of the Internal Auditor's Report completed by Mr Griff Williams. Approval of the Annual Governance Statement was agreed and the Statement was signed by the Chairman and the Clerk.

The Clerk reported that the Internal Auditor had no recommendations to make to the Council, but noted that under the new Transparency Code for Small Authorities signed copies of the Statement of Accounts, the Annual Governance Statement and the Internal Auditor's Report would have to be published on the Parish Council's website.

4350 – Annual Return Section 2 – Approval of Accounting Statements 2016/17: Copies of Section 2 of the Annual Return – the Statement of Accounts – had been enclosed with the Agendas, along with a copy of the Financial Statements, considered at the previous meeting, showing how the figures in the Statement of Accounts had been derived. Approval of the Statement of Accounts was agreed and this was signed by the Chairman. It was noted that the large variation in boxes 3 (Total other receipts) was due to the grant received for the Housing Needs Survey the previous year; and the large variation in boxes 6 (All other payments) was due to the money spent War Memorial garden wall and the balance of the payment for Housing Needs Survey.

4351 – Appointment of Staffing Committee and Employment Matters: Staffing Committee – John Sommer volunteered to serve on the Committee along with the Chairman and Justin Witcombe. Clerk's Salary – the 1% increase in the Clerk's hourly rate jointly recommended by the National Association of Local Councils and the Society of Local Council Clerks was agreed. Pensions Declaration – the Clerk reported having made the required declaration to the Pensions Regulator that the Parish Council had no employees who qualified for automatic enrolment in a workplace pension.

4352 – Annual Grants from the Parish Council: It was agreed to provide the budgeted grants of £300 to the Village Hall (£100 for the Parish Council's own meetings, £150 for committee meetings of other village organisations and £50 to help with maintenance costs) and £200 to the Parochial Church Council for the maintenance of the churchyard. It was also agreed to give two grants of £100 (as budgeted) to Mendip Community Transport under the section 137 power, and to the Mendip Citizen's Advice Bureau.

4353 - Authorisation of payment: Councillors authorised the following payments in addition to the grants agreed under the previous item:

- £159.00 Gardens of Avalon – Grass cutting for May.
- £15.00 Somerset Playing Fields Association – Subscription.
- £23.29 SSE – Electricity for Playing Field.

4354 – Other Business - Matters of Information Only: Iona FitzGerald requested a paper copy of the Agenda and papers in future. She also expressed concern that it had not been possible to find anyone to undertake ad hoc cutting of the Playing Field grass in addition to the contract with Gardens of Avalon.

Jayne Cox reported that four wheel drive vehicles had been driven down the Honeycliff bridleway. The MBBA had the No Vehicle signs but no posts to put them on. However, the County Council were prepared to put up bridleway signs, to which the MBBA signs could be attached.

Ian Sage reported an approach to erect a mobile phone mast and it was noted this would require planning permission. Louise Nicholson expressed concern at not being notified about the planning application at Elm House.

4355 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 5th July at 8.00pm in the Old School, Batcombe.

Chris Wildridge
5th July 2017