

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

Tel: 01749 850934

e-mail: clerk@batcombe-parish-council-somerset.org.uk

Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 5th July 2017 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 8.00pm.

Present - Councillors: Chris Wildridge – Chairman, Mary Comley, Jayne Cox, Ian Sage (arrived at item 4360), and John Sommer.

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage, Dick Skidmore – District Councillor and one member of the public.

4356 – Apologies for Absence: Iona FitzGerald, Justin Witcombe and Nigel Hewitt-Cooper – County Councillor.

4357 – Declarations of Interest: Jayne Cox declared an interest in the authorisation of the Clerk's salary and expenses as a relative of the Clerk.

4358 – Public Participation: None.

4359 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 7th June 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4360 – Matters Arising: Annual Grants – the Clerk reported that letters of thanks for the grants awarded at the last meeting had been received from the Batcombe Village Hall Trust, Mendip Community Transport and the Mendip Citizens' Advice Bureau.

4361 – District and County Councillors Reports: The District Councillor stated that he met with the County Councillor regularly and would act as a conduit for any matters of concern at County level as the County Councillor was not able to attend every meeting due to clashes with other meetings.

4362 – Affordable Housing: It was noted that the landowner in Westcombe who had offered land for affordable housing had now withdrawn that offer. The Parish Council were still awaiting a response from the Diocesan Board of Finance with regard to the glebe field. The Parish Council to consider in September whether it should be more proactive in seeking land for affordable housing.

4363 – Footpaths and Highways: Pre-salting in Batcombe – The Chairman had exchanged e-mails with the County Councillor and was hoping to meet with him and the portfolio holder for highways before the end of August.

Footpath from Pugh's Bottom Farm to Eastcombe Lane – The Chairman had exchanged e-mails with the landowners and put them in contact with the County Council's Rights of Way Officer. Both parties would be happy for a diversion of the footpath away from the problem areas, which would come before the Parish Council when formally proposed. Ian Sage noted that the proposed diversion went through another landowner's field and that the tenants at Pugh's Bottom had not been informed that there was a problem.

Honeycliff Bridleway – Jayne Cox reported that the County Council would be happy for posts to be placed in the bridleway to prevent vehicles using it, provided the landowners did not object. The signs stating vehicles should not use it had gone up.

Frys Lane – Jayne Cox noted that the hedge opposite Longleat Cottage needed to be cut back to allow horse riders access to the lane.

No HGV Sign – The Chairman thanked Ian Sage for replacing the sign on the A359 junction.

4364 – SSE Networks Stakeholder Engagement Day – 6th September 2017: Following a personal complaint made the Chairman after the recent power cuts, SSE Networks have offered to come to the Jubilee Hall for a Stakeholder Engagement Day on September 6th to address concerns. It was agreed to invite SSE Networks and to make the point that 25% of the village depended on private water supplies.

4365 – Playing Field - Annual Safety Inspection Report: The annual RoSPA inspection of the play equipment in the Playing Field had taken place on Thursday 29th June with the Clerk, Ian Sage and Anthony Greenhalgh from Mainstay Projects in attendance. The Council's insurers had stated that they were happy for the saddle unit to be replaced on the zip wire by a volunteer provided it was inspected by RoSPA before being used and this was done by Ian Sage shortly before the inspection. The inspection report had been received shortly before the meeting and Councillors had been provided with a link to download an electronic copy and paper copies were available at the meeting.

The inspector had no concerns with the zip wire once a small adjustment had been made to the position of the breaking spring had been made by Ian Sage in the presence of the inspector. The inspector did find some wood rot in the main support which would need to be monitored.

There were a number of issues with wood rot on the multi-play equipment and Anthony Greenhalgh had agreed that Mainstay Projects would place an upright post (broken when the inspector tested it), close up an entrapment gap in the ladder, replace a rotten decking board and add two support posts to the two most rotten legs of the equipment. The Clerk was asked to confirm the timescale for this work with Mainstay Projects. It was agreed to obtain the wood preserver recommended by Mainstay Projects to treat the equipment in the Playing Field.

It was noted that the wood in the seat around the tree stump was rotten with several pieces missing. Ian Sage volunteered to obtain a price for timber to replace the rotten wood and would report at the September meeting.

The mole continues to be active.

The Annual Fete. On behalf of the PCC Rob Jones had requested the use of the Playing Field for the annual village fete on the August Bank Holiday Monday on the same basis as in previous years, and the Parish Council agreed to this with the Playing Field being closed from 8.00pm on the Saturday as well as the Sunday and Tuesday morning to allow the preparation and clearing up after the fete to be done safely. It was also agreed to allow the PCC to erect two storage tents on the Saturday provided these did not interfere with the use of the play equipment.

4366 – Planning Applications: Planning Application No: 2017/1454/HSE Replace doors and windows, block 5 no. windows, insert new windows in garage, render block elevations and carry out internal alterations. Spring Cottage, Batcombe – Householder Application.

There were no objections to the proposed alterations and the Council decided to recommend approval.

Planning Application No: 2017/1708/LBC Masonry works to Elevations. Batcombe Lodge, Batcombe – Listed Building Consent. Concerns were expressed that the photographs supplied with the application appeared to show work of a poor quality - the repointing of the rubble stonework did not appear to have been done with appropriate materials and the attempt to remove the paintwork from the Ashlar stone seemed to have resulted in damage to the stonework. The Parish Council decided to leave the decision to the Conservation Officer, asking him to ensure that appropriate materials were used in the works on this building and that the building would be returned to its original appearance once work is complete.

Planning Application Updates: Ravenswood – The Chairman had met with Ian Bowen, the head of the planning department at Mendip; taking with him a recording of a telephone message from the case officer agreeing to an extension to the deadline for considering the application. As a result, the District Council had apologised for making a decision before the Parish Council had responded and would be changing their procedures, so that extensions would no longer be made verbally without a written agreement. The Chairman thanked the District Councillor for his help in arranging the meeting and the District Councillor stated that the meeting had reminded the planning department that parish councils take planning applications seriously.

Listed Building Consent had been granted for the replacement of the windows at Batcombe Lodge.

4367 – Planning Appeal (Planning Application No: 2016/1657/FUL) Mr David Willis had appealed against the District Council’s decision to refuse planning permission for the conversion of the stables at Crows Hill to holiday accommodation. The original application had been considered by the Parish Council in August 2016 and refusal of permission had been recommended. The Chairman proposed that an amended version of his submission to the District Council Planning Board on the application should be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate. It was agreed that the Clerk and Chairman should agree the text of the submission and distribute it to Councillors before submitting it to the Inspectorate.

4368 – Consultation on the Listing of Westcombe War Memorial: Copies of the consultation report produced by Historic England on the proposed listing of the Westcombe War Memorial were distributed with the Agenda. (Batcombe’s War Memorial had been listed earlier in the year.) The Clerk was asked to inform Historic England that the land on which the Westcombe War Memorial was located probably still belonged to the descendant of the family that once owned Westcombe House.

4369 – Review of Standing Orders: The Parish Council’s Standing Orders were adopted in February 2014 and are based on a model produced by the National Association of Local Councils. It was noted that Standing Orders had been amended in 2016 to allow the electronic distribution of Agendas and papers to those Councillors who wished to receive them in this manner. No further amendments to Standings Orders were felt to be necessary.

4370 - Authorisation of payment: Councillors authorised the following payments. Ian Sage declared an interest in the authorisation of the Clerk’s salary and expenses as a relative of the Clerk.

£109.00	Gardens of Avalon – Grass cutting for June.
£138.60	Playsafety Limited – RoSPA safety inspection of play equipment

£222.00 Oaktree Garden Products – Playbark for Playing Field
£977.25 The Clerk – Salary for 1st Quarter.
£123.54 The Clerk – Expenses for 1st Quarter.

4371 – Other Business - Matters of Information Only: Issues regarding e-mail communication were to be considered at the September meeting.

External Audit and Transparency Code Requirements – The Clerk reported that the Annual Return had been sent to the external auditors along with other required papers, the period for the exercise of public rights had been advertised on the website and the requirements of the Transparency Code to publish various papers on the website had been met.

The Chairman asked if training was available for the Council’s newest Councillor. The Clerk to check with the Somerset Association of Local Councils.

The Chairman stated that 1&1 the providers of the Parish Council’s website were also able to provide e-mails and asked that dedicated Parish Council e-mail address be set up.

4372 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 2nd August at 8.00pm in the Old School, Batcombe – only if required to consider planning applications – otherwise Wednesday 6th September at 8.00pm in the Old School, Batcombe.

Chris Wildridge
6th September 2017