

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 6th December 2017 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 7.30pm.

Present - Councillors: Chris Wildridge – Chairman, Jayne Cox, Kaveh Javvi, Ian Sage, John Sommer and Justin Witcombe.

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage, Dick Skidmore – District Councillor, Nigel Hewitt-Cooper and four members of the public.

4425 – Apologies for Absence: Mary Comley.

4426 – Declarations of Interest: None.

4427 – Public Participation: None.

4428 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 1st November 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4429 – Matters Arising: None that were not covered by items on the Agenda.

4430 – Planning Applications: Planning Application No: 2017/2824/HSE Proposed single storey side extension and re-siting oil tank. 10 Kale Street, Batcombe – Householder Application. The applicant spoke to the application, noting that the roof pitch of the existing extension was too low allowing rain to enter and cause damage. The Parish Council decided to recommend approval as there were no objections to the proposed extension.

4431 – Footpaths and Highways: The Chairman reported on a meeting he had attended at County Hall, Taunton with Councillor John Woodman, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, and Alyn Jones, Operations Director for Highways and Transport. Notes on the meeting were distributed to Councillors. The Chairman felt that the meeting confirmed that the removal of Batcombe from the pre-salting network was budget led, and reported a suggestion from Mr Woodman that the Parish Council might consider making a contribution towards the cost of pre-salting the road through the village. It was also suggested that residents might be more pro-active in using the bags of salt provided to solve any problems, although the Chairman was concerned at the potential liabilities of asking volunteers to salt icy roads. It was also noted that Batcombe would still be included in the continuous bad weather programme.

Somerset Highways had attempted to grit from Evercreech as far as the Old Rectory on Gold Hill, but were unable to do so because of a parked car on the route, and as a result were likely to revert to gritting as far as the junction with Spargrove Lane on the edge of Westcombe. Somerset Highways had stated that they needed a 3.5m clearance for the gritting lorry to pass parked cars, although the Chairman noted that the unobstructed road width at the Round House was less than this. The Chairman and the District Councillor had both spoken to the owner of the car who had refused to move it, and after some discussion, during which it was noted that the car had been parked there for 8 years without causing a problem, it was agreed to talk to the local police regarding the obstruction of the highway. The Chairman noted that

although Somerset Highways were committed to severe weather gritting they would still have a problem if the road was obstructed.

4432 – Shindig Weekender May 2018 Licence Application: The Chairman noted that two of the directors of the Shindig festival had made a presentation at the previous meeting. The owner of the Batcombe Vale campsite noted the impact of the festival on his business and stated that no one from the festival had contacted him regarding the problems at this year's festival. The District Councillor reported that he had had no help from the officer at South Somerset District Council regarding the problem of the prominent portaloos installed on the festival site. The Clerk went through the details of the application noting that in addition to the increased attendance there would be an extra day at the 2018 Shindig, ten venues in place of six in 2017 and increased hours for music to be played earlier each day. He also noted that the organisers had promised to move the venue that was felt to be the source of the problems at the last festival. The Council felt that the noise was unacceptable in 2017 and so the festival should not get any larger. It was felt that it was unnecessary for music to be played until 4.00am in the morning and that there needed to be more effective monitoring of noise that was independent of the festival organisers. The Clerk was asked to make a representation in consultation with the Chairman. The Chairman volunteered to attend any hearing that might follow as a result of the representation.

4433 – District and County Councillors Reports: The Chairman thanked the County Councillor (who had arrived during the previous item) for organising the meeting at County Hall. The County Councillor felt that he had exhausted everything he could do and until the parking issue was sorted there was nothing more that could be done.

The County Councillor noted that after the County Council's Children's Services had been rated unacceptable, the Council had been "buddied up" with Essex County Council and the latest Ofsted inspection suggested that improvements had been made. He encouraged Parish Councillors to attend to planning training sessions in the New Year and noted that Library Services were not going to be taken out of house. Jayne Cox felt that the County Council was too distant and when there was a problem with the school bus they didn't know the area.

4434 – Planning Application Updates: The applications for the construction of an agricultural building for the accommodation of dairy cows at Lower Farm and for the construction of a new single storey garage and new stairwell at Chatley Barn had been approved. The applications for Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent for an extension and internal alterations at Donegal Cottage had also been approved.

It was noted that the District Council had organised training sessions on planning. Unfortunately, the one in Shepton Mallet was on the same evening as the January Parish Council meeting, but Councillors were encouraged to attend the later meetings at Frome and Glastonbury.

4435 – Allotments: The Clerk reported that the allotment rents had been due on November 1st and that four allotments had been paid for and three were vacant, leaving a further three to be paid for.

Justin Witcombe and Ian Sage volunteered to replace the rotten gatepost at the entrance to the allotments field.

4436 – Affordable Housing: The Clerk reported that Hastoe Housing had informed him that there would soon be a vacancy in one of the two-bedroomed houses at Ash Tree Cottages and

had asked the Parish Council to let local people know about the vacancy, which was being advertised on the Homefinder Somerset website that week.

4437 – Playing Field - Maintenance Report: The Bingo Evening organised by Claire Kingston had raised £572 towards the cost of a new frame for the nest swing. It was noted that a new frame was likely to cost around £1,200. The Chairman had spoken with Claire who was happy for the money to be kept for use on the play equipment when sufficient funds had been raised. The Clerk had investigated the Tesco Bags of Help scheme suggested by Claire as another source of funds and reported that this involved asking for a specific sum between £1,000 and £4,000 for a particular project. Instead of just asking for the £1,200 for the nest swing frame it was agreed to come back to the next meeting with ideas for a larger project.

The Chairman and Ian Sage volunteered to organise specifications for the replacement of the legs of the multi-play apparatus; it having been agreed in principle to replace the legs at the last meeting and to obtain quotes for replacing some or all of the legs.

The Clerk reported that he had obtained an estimate of £75 from Gary Butler to remove the top growth on the willow tunnel and the willow arch over the seat in the Playing Field. As the estimate was below £100 there was no requirement to obtain further estimates and it was agreed to ask Gary Butler to do the work.

The Clerk also reported that Gardens of Avalon had quoted the same price as the current year for cutting the Playing Field grass in the next season and this was also agreed.

Justin Witcombe had spoken to the landowner of the neighbouring field about placing mole repellents around the Playing Field.

4438 – Budget and Precept 2018/19: A revised budget for the year ending 31st March 2019 and forecast for the years 2017-2021 had been enclosed with the Agendas. The Chairman had proposed adding £4,000 over two years as possible figure for the repair of the multiplay equipment in the Playing Field and a further £400 as a contribution towards the cost of commemorating the end of the First World War. (It had been suggested that a plaque be erected to recognise those who fought in the War.) As a result the Clerk proposed an increase of £500 each year in the precept to cover these additional costs.

After discussion the Budget was agreed in principle with the precept increasing by £500 to £9,450. A final decision on the precept would be made at the January meeting when the tax base and the impact of the increase on householders' Council Tax should be known.

4439 - Authorisation of payment: Councillors authorised the following payments.

- £159.00 Gardens of Avalon – Grass cutting in November.
- £120.00 Grant Thornton UK LLP – Audit fee.

The second was a retrospective authorisation, the fee having been paid on receipt of the invoice.

4440 – Other Business - Matters of Information Only: Ian Sage volunteered to provide specifications for the wood needed to repair the seat in the Playing Field.

The area around Batcombe House, Batch Orchard and the Old Rectory and the churchyard would both be designated Local Green Spaces under the new Mendip Local Plan and it had been suggested that the Parish Council consider adding other areas of the parish. It was noted that the Parish Council had considered this earlier in the year.

4441 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 10th January at 7.30pm in the Old School, Batcombe. At the request of the Clerk, it was agreed to move the Annual Parish Meeting to the first Wednesday in April.

Chris Willdridge
10th January 2018