

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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You are Summoned to the Annual Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council to be held on Wednesday 9th May 2018 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. No Vice Chairman was elected last year.

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. 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.

5. 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.

6. Minutes of Meeting held on Wednesday 4th April 2018 to be agreed and signed. Enclosed.

7. Matters Arising – information updates only.

Nothing that does not appear on the Agenda below.

8. 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.

9. Allotments

No interest has been shown in the four vacant allotments. The Council needs to consider how it will manage the vacant allotments so that they do not have an adverse impact on the rented allotments.

As a result of the allotments being vacant there was a £50 deficit on the allotment funds in the last financial year (see attached Financial Statements). With only six allotments occupied the rent only covers the lease of the field and any maintenance has to come out of allotment funds held to store the field at the end of the lease. At the start of the year there was £968 of earmarked allotment funds.

10. Footpaths and Highways

We have been informed that Quaperlake Street in Bruton is expected to be closed for two evenings (6.30pm to 11.30pm) from June 11th to allow resurfacing of the road. Closures of Quaperlake usually mean additional traffic through Batcombe but this may be less so in the evening.

We have received an apology from Alyn Jones, the Director of Economic and Community Infrastructure Operations for the oversight in responding to the letter from the residents of Kale Street. He has enclosed a copy of the letter he has sent to the residents which states that Batcombe does not qualify for inclusion on the Presalting Network and that the winter gritting policy will be reviewed over the summer but he does not wish to raise expectations that Batcombe will be restored to the Presalting Network. He adds that the County Council would be willing to fill grit bins if the Parish Council wished to promote this option.

The meeting with our MP on Saturday 21st April was a positive one with a good attendance of residents who made their concerns clear. David Warburton has promised to do what he can to get the matter resolved recognising the problems caused by the topography of the village.

Somerset Highways have been asked if a No HGV sign can be placed at the Hedgestocks crossroads. After an initial request for more information, I have heard nothing further.

11. Playground - Maintenance Report.

The annual inspection of the Playing Field by RoSPA will take place in June. We need to order additional playbark for the multi-play. There is now a small hole in the floor of the multi-play, which needs to be covered. Cutting of the grass was delayed by the poor weather but has now began. The moles continue to be active.

The Chairman and Ian Sage have discussed the cost of obtaining suitable timber to repair the seat around the rotten stump and their conclusion is that it would be simpler to remove the seat and the stump and buy a seat to be placed elsewhere in the Playing Field. This would leave a space that could be used for the nest swing when funds allow the purchase of a new frame.

There will be an open meeting in The Three Horseshoes on Saturday May 19th at 2.00pm for parents to suggest ideas of what they would like in the way of play equipment in the Playing Field.

12. Planning Applications:

Planning Application No: 2018/0929/TCA - Proposed reduction of limbs by 1-2 metres on a Cedar. Rockwells House, Batcombe – Works/Felling Trees in a Conservation Area

This is the large Cedar on the lawn in front of Rockwells House. The proposed reduction of the limbs will “reduce weight and stop breakages within the canopy”.

Planning Application No: 2018/0849/HSE - Demolition of existing single storey extension and first floor roof. Construction of new single storey extension and dormer roof to existing dwelling.

Mole Cottage, Kale Street, Batcombe – Householder Application

Planning Application No: 2018/0850/LBC - Demolition of existing single storey extension and first floor roof. Construction of new single storey extension and dormer roof to existing dwelling.

Mole Cottage, Kale Street, Batcombe – Listed Building Consent

Planning Application Updates.

The application for a detached double garage and adjoining ground floor studio and further studio space over the garage at Holly Hill House has been approved. No conditions have been imposed

other than those relating to the approval of materials and landscaping. The Parish Council had recommended refusal of permission.

13. Variation of Premises Licence Application – Wild Beer Brewery

The Wild Beer Co have applied for a variation of their premises licence for the brewery in Westcombe to extend the area it covers to the area behind Alshilla Cottages. If we wish to make a representation we have until May 22nd to do so.

14. Music Festivals at Gilcombe Farm

As reported to Councillors by e-mail, the appeal to the Magistrates Court by the organisers of the Shindig Festival will now not take place as a consent order has been signed re-instating the hours of recorded and live music as in the application (i.e. up to 4.00am). However, a number of further conditions were added to the premises licence with the aim of preventing public nuisance from occurring. See Appendix One of the Shindig Noise Management Plan (attached) for details of these conditions.

The organisers of the Field Trip festival have withdrawn their premises licence application and have decided to “move on to pastures new”. The conditions imposed on the Shindig festival may have been a factor in their decision.

A representation has been made regarding the premises licence application for the One Love festival at Gilcombe Farm from Friday August 31st to Sunday September 2nd 2018. As the hours applied for music to be played until are not as late (2.00am on the Saturday and Sunday mornings and midnight on the Sunday evening) the representation asks for noise limits that will prevent local residents being disturbed in the early hours of the morning and that South Somerset District Council undertakes to ensure that the noise is monitored and complaints dealt with effectively and promptly.

15. 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.

16. Appointment of Staffing Committee and Employment and Administrative Matters

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.) Current members of the Committee are the Chairman, John Sommer and Justin Witcombe.

In September the Clerk was asked to report any additional hours worked in the previous year at the May meeting. In 2017/18 the Clerk worked two additional hours and requests he be allowed to take this as time in lieu during 2018/19.

Clerk's Salary - The National Joint Council for Local Government Services has reached agreement on new pay scales for 2018/19 and 2019/20. The National Association of Local Councils and the Association of Local Council Clerks jointly recommend the salary scales for 2018/19 - they are still discussing the salary scales for 2019/20 - for all Clerks with the standard contract of employment. Under the new pay scales, the Clerk's salary will increase from £10.739 to £10.953 from April 1st 2018. This is a 2% increase.

Hire of Old School - The Parish Council has for the last ten years paid the Village Hall Trust £100 a year for the hire of the Old School and Jubilee Hall for its meetings. During that time the Trust has increased its charges for the hire of these rooms and the number of meetings held by the Parish Council has increased. I therefore recommend that the Parish Council increase its payment to the Village Hall Trust to £150 a year. This will cover the cost of 11 two-hour meetings in the Old School (at £5 per hour) and one three-hour meeting in the Jubilee Hall (at £8 per hour) and plus a couple of short extra meetings. This would be an increase of £50 on the budgeted figure and is usually paid in June.

17. General Data Protection Regulation Matters

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) comes into effect on May 25th, although the legislation is still going through Parliament. The Government are planning to introduce an amendment that would mean that Parish Councils would not have to appoint a Data Protection Officer. This could have caused problems for Councils with a single employee as it was suggested that the Clerk could not fulfil this role because of a conflict of interest.

The other requirements of the GDPR will still apply to the Parish Council. The Council needs to decide who will be responsible for ensuring the Parish Council's compliance with data protection law. The Council also needs to conduct a data audit to discover what personal data the Council holds and where it came from. As part of the audit the Parish Council needs to identify and document the lawful basis for processing the data it holds. We also need to check that our processes meet individuals' new rights, which include the right to have data deleted and the right to know what data the Council holds on them, why it is being processed and whether it has been divulged to a third party – this is by a Subject Access Request, which the Council has a month to respond to. We have to review how we obtain consent which must be explicitly given. We also have to review our notices and policies. These include a privacy notice telling people how we will use their data and a data retention and disposal policy. We also have to be prepared to detect, report and investigate data protection breaches.

We do not have to have all this in place by May 25th but do have to have a plan in place to implement it. I suggest that the Clerk is made the person responsible for compliance with data protection law and asked to produce a data audit for the June meeting.

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. As this is there will be a Parish Council election in May next year, it would be appropriate to review all the Council's other policies over the year as well.

I suggest the following timetable: Data Protection to be reviewed at the June meeting (see item 17 above); Financial Regulations to be reviewed at the July meeting; Standing Orders at the September meeting; Complaints Procedure and Code of Conduct at the October meeting; 2019/2020 Budget to be reviewed at the November meeting; Media Policy and Social Media Policy at the December meeting; Freedom of Information, membership of SALC and payment of Clerk's subscription to SLCC at the January meeting; Risk Management Policy and insurance cover at the February meeting; and the Schedule of Assets at the March meeting.

19. Insurance Renewal

The Council entered into a long-term agreement with Came and Company two years ago and this has a year to run. Came and Company have informed us that the premium for this year will be £291.20 (£280 last year). The increase is due to the index linking of the sums insured.

20. Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31st March 2018

The bank reconciliation for the fourth quarter to 31st March to be verified by a Councillor 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 £140 less than budgeted because four allotments are vacant. The fundraising for new play equipment had not been budgeted for. As a result, receipts were £440 more than budgeted.

The cost of the grass cutting in the Playing Field was less than budgeted as additional cuts were not undertaken but more than the previous year due to very mild weather during the first half of the winter. The cost of the electricity supply was similar to the previous year but the cost of the water supply was lower than the previous year when the tap in the shelter had been left running. The cost of maintenance was less than budgeted - £222 was paid for Playbark, £75 for wood preservative and £75 for cutting back the willow. In the previous year £594 had been paid for the repair to the zip wire. The annual inspection was more than budgeted as it was agreed to accompany the inspector. As a result the Playing Field payments were £260 less than budgeted, although it should be noted that it is difficult to budget accurately for maintenance costs as these vary from year to year.

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 slightly less than budgeted. The Clerk's membership of SLCC for 2017 was paid for by the Clerk and reclaimed in his expenses while his 2018 membership was paid directly by the Council – as a result the cost of two years' membership appear in the financial statements for 2017/18 while none appears for 2016/17. The cost of internet protection for the Parish Council laptop had not been included in the budget. No training or publications were purchased, but audit fees were due because the donations received the previous year took the Council's income above £10,000. No bill was received for photocopying in 2017/18. Most other administration expenses were largely as budgeted and overall administration costs were £70 more than 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 £60 spent on hedge cutting. £318 of the £395 grant for new notice boards was spent on a new notice board on the churchyard wall. This did not appear in the budget as when the budget was produced it had been assumed the grant would have been spent in the previous year. The notice board in Westcombe was repaired by a local resident and no costs were claimed. As a result of the above, total payments were £100 more than budgeted.

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 £968 of allotments money of which £200 would pay for the lease of the field in May, leaving £768 until the rent is paid in November. Other earmarked monies in the Parish Council accounts at the end of the year were the £572 raised for new play equipment and the remaining £77 of the grant money for new notice boards.

The net result of the variations against the budget given above is a surplus of £1,620 on the year instead of the budgeted surplus of £1,276. (A surplus was budgeted to help cover the cost of a contested Parish Council election in 2019.) The additional surplus is largely a result of the money raised for new play equipment. At the end of the year the Parish Council had £7,575 in its funds, £1,800 more than anticipated in the budget. Of this £968 is set aside for the allotments, £572 for new play equipment and £77 for notice boards. This means that the Parish Council has funds totalling £5,960 that are not earmarked for specific items. This should be a sufficient reserve to cover the possible costs a contested election in 2019 and/or 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 £6,000.

Our internal auditor will be unable to complete the audit by the deadline of the end of June. This means we need to find another internal auditor at short notice. This needs to be someone who is familiar with the workings of a parish council and has basic bookkeeping skills.

21. Update on Budget for Year Ending 31st March 2019

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. The third column is the updated projection for this year. This year's precept of £9,200 has been received. The VAT repayment will be less than budgeted as it was anticipated that money for the repair of the seat in the Playing Field would have been spent last year. £176.88 for the year up to March 2018 will be claimed shortly. I am expecting the allotments rent to be similar to last year and less than the budgeted figure as no interest has been shown in the vacant allotments. With regard to payments, the Clerk's salary will be slightly less than budgeted and I am recommending that the amount spent on the hire of the Old School be increased.

This gives a projected deficit of £1,180 on the year – compared to a budgeted deficit of £1,000, which is mainly due allotments rent being less than expected. This gives funds of £6,395 at the end of the year of which £900 will be earmarked for the allotments and £572 for play equipment.

Note: The budget and projection both include a figure of £2,000 for repair of the multi-play equipment. This is based on an estimate of £4,000 spread over two years. The actual cost and when it is paid could vary considerably.

22. Authorisation of Payment

Came & Company - £291.20 – Insurance premium.

Somerset Association of Local Councils - £108.43 – Affiliation fees.

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

Mr G Sparkes (Gardens of Avalon) - £100.00 – Grass cutting in April.

23. 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.

24. Dates of Future Meetings - Next Meeting: Wednesday 6th June 2018 at 8.00pm in the Old School.

Traditionally the Parish Council has met on the first Wednesday of the month. For 2018/2019, the suggested dates, to be confirmed at the meeting, are:

<i>6th June</i>	<i>4th July</i>	<i>1st August</i>	<i>5th September</i>	<i>3rd October</i>	<i>7th November</i>
<i>5th December</i>	<i>9th January</i>	<i>6th February</i>	<i>6th March</i>	<i>3rd April</i>	<i>8th May</i>

The August meeting will only take place if required to consider planning applications. Having the January meeting on the second Wednesday of the month avoids the Clerk having to prepare the Agenda over Christmas. Wednesday April 3rd would also be the date of the Annual Parish Meeting. The date of the May 2019 meeting is provisional as this meeting has to take place “on or within 14 days following the day on which the new Councillors elected take office”, which depends upon the date of the Parish Council election (usually the first Thursday in May). The Council normally meets at 8.00pm in the summer and at 7.30pm for the rest of the year.

Rob Sage