

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 2nd September 2020 in the Jubilee Hall, Batcombe commencing at 7.30pm.

This was the first physical meeting of the Parish Council since the lockdown due to the Coronavirus pandemic and those attending were asked to use hand sanitiser, maintain social distancing and wear a face covering unless they had a valid reason not to.

Present - Councillors: Mary Comley – Chairman, Jayne Cox, Peter Glaisher and Janet Jones.

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage and ten members of the public (*a record of those attending was kept until the following meeting in case it was required for Test and Trace*).

4914 – Apologies for Absence: Apologies had been received from Ian Sage, David Stevens and Justin Witcombe.

4915 – Declarations of Interest: None.

4916 – Public Participation: A local resident reported an infestation of rats in Kale Street and a car being driven fast in Kale Street, whose driver was abusive when asked to slow down. Several other members of the public expressed concerns about the dangers of cars being driven too fast for the roads in the village and drivers being abusive. It was noted that this was a matter for the police but the resident concerned was not prepared to report the incident. Instead the Parish Council was asked to put a reminder in the parish magazine about the need for considerate driving in the village. **Action: The Clerk.**

4917 – Minutes of the Meetings held on Thursday July 9th and Wednesday 5th August 2020 were agreed as a correct record after two amendments were made to the Minutes of July 9th. In Minute 4887 “Voneus” was replaced by “the village” and in Minute 4892 the first sentence of the second paragraph was deleted. The Clerk asked Councillors to let him know of potential corrections to the Minutes before the meeting so that the copy to be signed by the Chairman could be amended. These Minutes, and a copy of the Minutes for the meeting held on Wednesday 4th March which had been approved at the remote meeting in July, were then signed by the Chairman.

4918 – Matters Arising: Annual Return - The Certificate of Exemption had been sent to the external auditors and acknowledged. The notice of the period for the exercise of public rights to examine the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) and the accounting records for the year it refers to had been published on the Parish Council website along with the AGAR and the other documents required under the Transparency Code.

Himalayan Balsam – Tom Price had provided the required risk assessment for the working party to remove the Himalayan Balsam from Coney Wood and had received an Access Agreement from the Woodland Trust.

Annual Grants – Thanks for the grants from the Parish Council made at the July meeting had been received from the Village Hall Trust, Batcombe PCC and the Citizen’s Advice Bureau.

4919 – District and County Councillors’ Reports: A written report had been received from the County Councillor and distributed to Parish Councillors.

4920 – Sewage Treatment Plant at Ash Tree Cottages: As noted in the Minutes of the August meeting, the District Councillor had stated that Hastoes solicitors needed to come to agreement with the solicitors of the landowners of the neighbouring field before work on the sewage treatment plant could take place. Justin Witcombe had informed the Clerk that the landowners had stated that the delay was not due to their solicitors.

4921 – Allotments: The owners of the allotment field had expressed concern about some overgrown areas in the field and the state of some of the fences between the allotment holders and had made the extension of the lease for another four years conditional on the allotments being tidied up. The Clerk had contacted the allotment holders to ask them to ensure their fences are kept tidy and it was agreed ask Gary Butler to cut back the inside of the hedge in the allotments field and strim the overgrown communal areas. **Action: The Clerk.**

4922 – Footpaths and Highways: The verges had been cut. Concerns about blocked gullies leading to flooding off Back Lane were reported to Somerset Highways - along with photos of water coming up out of the gully. As a result, the gully was inspected and jetted. Hopefully, this meant that the problem was resolved.

4923 – Playing Field - Maintenance Report: The Playing Field hedge had been cut back. A smart meter had been installed in the Playing Field but had not been commissioned because of the poor mobile signal. Concerns had been raised about the Playing Field gate which was badly warped and was decided to wait to see what money was left when the new play equipment had been installed.

New Play Equipment: The grant application to Viridor Credits had been completed by July 31st. Viridor Credits had excluded the £350 in the lowest quote for fencing and welfare during installation but a quick response by them meant an amended application was submitted by the deadline. An appeal on the Batcombe Facebook page had resulted in 37 e-mails of support which were submitted as part of the application. Thanks to be recorded to Sharon Witcombe, Bryony Fox and Clare Kingston for encouraging residents to provide an e-mail of support. As a result, the application scored high enough to be considered by the grant making committee in September. Viridor Credits would be making a pre-assessment visit early in September and the result should be known by the Council’s October meeting.

4924 – Planning Applications:

Planning Application No: 2020/1528/TCA T1 Oak - Fell. Batcombe Village Hall, Batcombe – Works/Felling Trees in a CA. The Parish Council agreed to recommend approval as the tree in the village hall carpark was clearly dying.

Planning Application No: 2020/1665/TCA T1-T3 Ash trees - Fell. Shortwood Farmhouse, Kale Street, Batcombe – Works/Felling Trees in a CA. The Parish Council decided to leave the decision to the Tree Officer as the trees were not in location where they could be seen to confirm the presence of Ash dieback.

Planning Application Updates: The Parish Council had received another informal request for its view on a proposal to convert the field by the telephone exchange into a camping site and it was noted that the field had sold for a very high price.

The Parish Council had been informed by the Torr Quarry Liaison Group that Aggregate Industries UK Limited (AIUK) had submitted an application to recommence limestone extraction from Bartletts Quarry at Nunney. One of the conditions of allowing the deepening of the Torr Quarry was that work on the Colemans Quarry complex at Nunney (of which

Bartletts Quarry is a part) should cease until quarrying at Torr had finished. However, increasing demand for limestone (for HS2) meant that AIUK wanted to operate both quarries together. Concerns about the impact of the quarrying on the water supply in Batcombe were noted and the Chairman volunteered to speak to the District Councillor about the matter.

Action: The Chairman.

4925 – Batcombe Conservation Volunteers Group: Tom Price had offered to organise and lead a Batcombe Conservation Volunteers Group to undertake work throughout the year to improve our green spaces if the Parish Council would support and provide public liability insurance. Tom would be willing to provide risk assessment and a list of volunteers for each activity. Councillors asked for more information on what works Tom was proposing to undertake and it was noted that the Parish Council's insurance would not cover work on the highways without the necessary training and certification. **Action: The Clerk.**

4926 – Website Accessibility Check: The Clerk reported that work on the Website Accessibility Check had been delayed by the need to complete the grant application for the new play equipment by July 31st. However, it should be possible to complete the checks and publish an Accessibility Statement on the website by the September 23rd deadline. **Action: The Clerk.**

4927 – Future Meetings – Remote, Physical or Hybrid?: It was noted that both physical and remote meetings had their drawbacks and that there were technical limitations with hybrid meetings. Councillors were divided as to which was preferable but it was decided to try for a physical meeting in October. A meeting of the play equipment working party would be held once the decision on the grant application was known.

4928 – Budget Update: The Clerk reported that the need to complete the grant application for the new play equipment by July 31st meant that he was unable to provide a budget update for the current meeting and it was agreed to defer this to the next meeting. **Action: The Clerk.**

4929 - Authorisation of payment: Councillors authorised the following payment:

£160.00 Dominic Conway – Grass cutting in the Playing Field in August.

The Clerk noted that as a result of the coronavirus restrictions he had made the payments to Gary Butler and Dominic Conway (authorised this month and in August – Minute 4911) by bank transfer from his own account and so was reimbursed the total of £510. (*Bank transfers not being possible from the Parish Council account.*)

4930 – Other Business - Matters of Information Only: The Clerk reported that the recommended salary rate would increase the Clerk's salary from £11-22 to £11-53 to be backdated to April 2020. The increase would need to be approved by the Parish Council at its next meeting.

The Clerk also reported that the Recycle More kerbside recycling scheme would be introduced in Mendip in October. More items could be recycled but refuse collections would be reduced to once every three weeks.

4931 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 7th October 2020 at 7.30pm in the Jubilee Hall, Batcombe.