

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 4th July 2018 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 8.00pm.

Present - Councillors: Chris Wildridge – Chairman, Mary Comley, Wiff Cox, Ian Sage, John Sommer and Justin Witcombe.

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

4552 – Apologies for Absence: Jayne Cox, Dick Skidmore – District Councillor and Nigel Hewitt-Cooper – County Councillor.

4553 – Declarations of Interest: John Sommer declared a pecuniary interest in the item on affordable housing. Justin Witcombe declared a pecuniary interest in the item on the allotments. Ian Sage declared an interest in the authorisation of the Clerk's expenses as a relative of the Clerk.

4554 – Public Participation: None.

4555 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 6th June 2018. The Chairman read a statement regarding the recording of the previous meeting and concerns that had been raised regarding the rules laid down for discussion at that meeting and his alleged partiality in calling people to speak. He noted that the rules for speaking were designed to allow everyone who wished to speak to express their views concisely and that in chairing the meeting he was completely impartial. The Chairman proposed that the following statement be inserted in the Minutes of the previous meeting and this was agreed: "Prior to the meeting a resident of the parish approached the Clerk for permission to record the proceedings of the meeting. The Clerk consulted the Chairman, who spoke with the resident and explained the Council's policy and restrictions that would apply including a bar on filming any individuals other than councillors. The Chairman then started the meeting and failed to advise councillors and the residents present that he had acceded to the request." The Chairman formally apologised to all residents present at the June meeting for his failure to do so. In his statement the Chairman noted that he had asked for a copy of the recording made but this had not been provided.

The Clerk reported that Mr Peter Glaisher had requested a number of changes be made to the draft Minutes of the previous meeting in regard to the discussion of the affordable housing. Mr Glaisher had objected to the cheese factory being referred to as a factory and felt that a number of points had been omitted from the Minutes. It was noted that the Minutes were not intended to be a verbatim record of every word spoken, but following discussions between the Chairman and Clerk it was proposed that a record of a question made by Olivia Self that Mr Glaisher had highlighted should be added to the Minutes. It was agreed that the following should be inserted in the Minutes: "Olivia Spenser asked if this was simply a proposal by Mr Bridgeman as the developer of the site and whether there were any other affordable housing proposals e.g. from a housing association".

With the addition of the two insertions given above, the Minutes were agreed as a correct record of the meeting on Wednesday June 6th 2018.

4556 – Matters Arising: General Data Protection Regulations – the Clerk reported that the privacy notice had been added to the Parish Council website.

4557 – Affordable Housing – Proposed Development in Westcombe: John Sommer left the room for this item. The Chairman reported on an informal meeting of himself and Councillors Mary Comley, Jayne Cox, Wiff Cox and Justin Witcombe with the potential developer Mr Bridgeman and his agent Mr Wright to discuss issues raised at the last Parish Council meeting. The Chairman read a prepared statement noting that they had discussed details of the proposed development with Mr Bridgeman and Mr Wright. Various suggestions were made by the councillors present and reassurances were given by Mr Bridgeman that they would be given significant consideration. Mr Bridgeman renewed his commitment to Section 106 conditions being applied to the development. Further commitments were made in relation to the production of drainage and noise technical reports.

In response to Mr Glaisher's question at the previous meeting about the order of events, the Chairman noted that in April 2015 he had produced a four-year plan for the Parish Council - which included examining the feasibility of providing of additional affordable housing – and that this plan had been considered by the Parish Council on 3rd June 2015 (Minute 3928). It was subsequent to this meeting that the Parish Council were made aware of an offer of land for affordable housing.

The Chairman then read a statement produced by John Sommer to clarify his arrangements with Mr Bridgeman. He had offered the site on Westcombe Stables Lane to Mr Bridgeman as a developer for the provision of affordable housing. If Mr Bridgeman submitted a scheme and planning permission was granted the benefit to John Sommer would be a building plot for one freehold dwelling. The plot for this open market dwelling would be included in the overall design of the scheme, so in the case of the draft plan for six homes planning permission would be sought for five affordable homes and one freehold home. If planning permission were obtained the freehold of the affordable rented homes and the shared areas would be transferred to Mr Bridgeman for use as affordable housing in perpetuity secured through the District Council by a section 106 agreement. This was in accordance with the District Council Local Plan Policy DP12 for the provision of affordable housing at rural exception sites.

The Chairman informed Mr Glaisher that all the documents referred to above would be forwarded to him.

4558 – Emergency Plan: The Chairman, Vice Chairman and Preb Mark Ellis had held a preliminary meeting to consider reviewing the Emergency Plan and the Chairman's notes from this meeting had been distributed with the Agendas. The Chairman proposed establishing a Working Party to review the Emergency Plan consisting of the Vice Chairman and Preb Mark Ellis with additional members to be added and this was agreed. The Chairman also suggested that an open meeting be held on a Saturday in September to discuss how the community could work together in periods of inclement weather.

4559 – Administration: As the members of the Staffing Committee had limited experience in undertaking appraisals, the Chairman proposed that he should contact Justin Robinson at the Somerset Association of Local Councils to see if someone could assist with the Clerk's annual appraisal and this was agreed.

The Chairman left the meeting at this point and the Vice Chairman took the chair.

4560 – District and County Councillors’ Reports: None.

4561 – Allotments: Having declared a pecuniary interest in this item, the Vice Chairman left the room and it was agreed that John Sommer should chair the meeting for this item. The Clerk reported that thanks to the efforts of the Vice Chairman and Dominic Conway the allotments were looking much tidier and the owners had agreed to a bonfire to burn the wooden rubbish in the corner of the field. The Clerk also reported that the Vice Chairman had offered to take on one of the vacant allotments for the remainder of the year (until November 1st) in addition to the one he already rented. This was agreed and in light of the work he had done on the vacant allotments it was agreed not to charge any rent for this period. The Clerk was also instructed to make a similar offer to Dominic Conway. The Clerk was also asked to determine whether the owners of the field were willing to renew the lease next April.

4562 – Footpaths and Highways: The Parish Council had been informed that the road to Bruton would be closed (between the Batcombe Vale campsite entrance and the Hedgestocks crossroads) for 9 days from July 12th to allow BT Openreach to carry out repairs to a faulty aerial cable. It was noted that a notice on the road stated that the closure would be for two days from July 12th from 9.30am to 3.30pm.

No response had yet been received from Somerset Highways regarding the request for a No HGV sign at the Hedgestocks crossroads which they had promised to look into sometime in June. Mary Comley volunteered to follow this up with the officer concerned.

The Clerk was asked to write a letter of thanks to the MP for attending the meeting in Batcombe regarding getting Batcombe re-instated on the pre-salting network.

Justin Witcombe reported that he had been asked by a local landowner to trim the stiles on the footpaths on this land.

4563 – Playing Field - Maintenance Report: The annual safety inspection of the Playing Field by RoSPA should have taken place in June, but the inspection report had not yet been received.

The molecatcher had provided evidence of three moles caught in the Playing Field and it was hoped that this had dealt with the problem. The Parish Council were happy for the molecatcher to keep an eye on the Playing Field and catch any further moles that appeared.

A meeting had been held with Clare Kingston to hear what the parents would like in the Playing Field. They would like to see the nest swing re-instated and it was suggested it could go where the tree stump had been provided there was sufficient fall space, which might mean having to move the monkey bars. Opinions were divided over the willow structure, with many younger children liking it. The parents would also like to see the goal nets replaced and the goalmouths levelled. It was also suggested that additional seating was needed and the existing bench be raised in height. Clare was willing to fundraise to help with the cost of these items.

It was suggested that an additional seat could be provided by a resident as a memorial and the Clerk was asked to put this suggestion in the parish magazine. It was also agreed that the picnic bench should be treated with the wood preservation already purchased and the legs of the swings painted. It was decided to use green paint and Ian Sage volunteered to purchase the paint. Clare Kingston would be asked to see if the parents would get involved in helping with the painting, wood treatment and possibly some willow weaving.

It was noted that dogs were being taken into the Playing Field by their owners and Clare had offered to contact Mendip Signs about a new sign.

It was also noted that the multi-play equipment needed to be checked regularly in case it became unsafe to use. No immediate action would be taken until the safety inspection report had been received.

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. The Clerk was asked to request that the PCC consider making a small contribution towards the costs of maintaining the Playing Field from the proceeds of the Fete.

The inside of the Playing Field hedge needed to be cut back before the Fete and the current grass cutting contractor did not have the equipment to do this. The Clerk was instructed to ask Gary Butler to undertake this work. It was noted that the willow in the Playing Field was growing rapidly but it was agreed to wait until the winter before getting this cut.

4564 – Planning Applications:

There were no applications to consider.

Planning Application Updates: Planning permission had been granted for the single storey rear extension, new porch and single storey side infill extension at Netherlea.

4565 – Review of Financial Regulations: Standing Orders require the Parish Council's Financial Regulations to be 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.

4566 - Authorisation of payment: Councillors authorised the following payments:

- £60.00 Mrs E E Clarke – Three moles caught in Playing Field.
- £160.00 Dominic Conway – Grass cutting in June.
- £120.00 Scrumpy's Groundworks – Removing tree stump in Playing Field.
- £15.00 Somerset Playing Field Association – Subscription.
- £996.72 The Clerk – Salary for 1st Quarter.
- £100.16 The Clerk – Expenses for 1st Quarter.

4567 – Other Business - Matters of Information Only: The Clerk reported that the Police and Crime Commissioner, Sue Mountstevens, would be unable to speak at the 2019 Annual Parish Meeting as the local elections would take place on May 2nd meaning the Annual Parish Meeting would be within the pre-election period. The Commissioner would be happy to come and meet the Parish Council at another date outside of that period.

4568 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 1st August 2018 at 8.00pm in the Old School Rooms, Batcombe if required to consider planning applications. Otherwise Wednesday 5th September 2018 at 8.00pm.

Chris Wildridge
5th September 2018