

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

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You are Summoned to the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council to be held on Wednesday 7th November 2018 at 7.30pm in the Old School, 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. Apologies and Acceptance of Reasons for Absence

2. 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.

3. 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.*

4. Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 3rd October 2018 to be agreed and signed. *Enclosed.*

5. Matters Arising – information updates only.

1918 Armistice Commemoration – The wreath has been purchased and Chris Wildridge has agreed to lay the wreath at the Act of Remembrance on Remembrance Sunday.

6. 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.

7. Allotments

Allotment rents are due on November 1st. There are currently two vacant allotments plus one that was let to an existing allotment holder at no charge. The hedge in the allotments field needs cutting back. The owners of the field have the new lease and the Parish Council will need to sign it when it is returned.

8. Emergency Plan

The Emergency Plan is being updated with the addition of the new volunteers and a checking of the relevant contacts. One issue to be addressed is the composition of the Community Emergency Management Team who hold the full Emergency Plan with the volunteers' contact details and who co-ordinate the response to an Emergency. It was previously agreed that this Team should consist of the Chairman, Vice Chairman, Clerk and one other who does not have to be on the Parish Council.

We may wish to expand this team to ensure that there is always someone available to respond to an emergency.

9. Footpaths and Highways

As reported previously to Councillors, the County Council has reduced the pre-salting network from 23 to 16 routes to save money and this means that not only has Batcombe not been reinstated on the pre-salting network but Evercreech has been removed as well. As a result, the Bruton-Evercreech road and the Evercreech-Westcombe roads will not be salted this winter.

The road past the Round House opposite Frys Lane was closed due to subsidence under the road and the house. The road has now been repaired and re-opened.

Another HGV has got stuck on Holly Hill and the police had to be called as the driver was in danger of doing some serious damage as he tried to extricate himself. Mary Comley has been in contact with the new technician at Somerset Highways responsible for No HGVs signs who is more optimistic about the provision of a No HGV sign at the Hedgestocks crossroads. We are asked to indicate on a map precisely where we would like the sign to go.

10. Playground - Maintenance Report.

The molecatcher caught five moles in the Playing Field and there are currently no molehills. The molecatcher will monitor the Playing Field for further signs of moles.

The standing charge for the supply of electricity to the Playing Field has increased from 19.61p per day to 42.42p per day. As we use very little electricity this means our bills will double. We may be able to reduce the rate by entering into a contract with Southern Electric or another supplier. I will investigate and report to the meeting.

New Play Equipment – *All three play equipment companies have now provided quotes for similar pieces of equipment (replacing the existing multi-play with a smaller multi-play and an accessible roundabout suitable for wheelchair use, and the additional of a basket seat swing and a pair of goals with basketball hoops). Copies of the quotes will be available at the meeting. The Working Party should meet to consider the quotes and the next stage in the process. There will be a Bingo Evening to raise money for the equipment on Saturday December 1st. This will determine how much 3rd party funding is available which we need to know before making a grant application.*

11. Planning Applications:

Planning Application No: 2018/2528/TCA

Works to a tree in a conservation area – T1 Eucalyptus (E1) – Fell.

Fir Tree Cottage, Batcombe – Works/Felling Trees in a CA

The Eucalyptus is behind Fir Tree Cottage and is considered to be too large for a small garden. There is also some evidence of disease.

Planning Application Updates.

The Tree Officer has apologised for “some hiccups in Office routines” which meant that not all consultations were sent out recently. He has promised that we will receive consultations for works on protected trees in future.

12. Bank Reconciliation and Budget Update 2018/19

Our Financial Regulations require that every quarter a bank reconciliation is produced by the Clerk, checked by a member of the Council, and reported to the Council as soon as possible after the end of the quarter. The bank reconciliation for the second quarter to 30th September should be verified before the meeting and reported to the Council. (The bank reconciliation shows that the cheque for the £100 grant to Mendip Citizens Advice Bureau has not yet been presented despite being sent in June. An acknowledgement of the donation has just been received, dated October 22nd.)

Financial Regulations also require the Clerk to provide an update on the budget each quarter. An update on the budget as at the end of October for the current year is enclosed. The first column shows the actual accounts for last year. The second column is the budget for this year as agreed in January. The third column is the receipts and payments to the end of October and the fourth column a projection of the position at the end of the year.

Receipts are projected to be approximately £90 less than the budgeted figure because there will probably be two vacant allotments in November and the VAT reclaimed was less than expected when the budget was produced.

The projection for the Playing Field expenditure is likely to be £2,000 less than budgeted as the £2,000 budgeted for repair of the multi-play may not be spent if it is decided to replace the play equipment (and if the repairs are undertaken they may be deferred to next year). Grass cutting and trimming includes £110 for hedge cutting. This is likely to be around £200 more than budgeted due to the change of contractor. Maintenance up to 31st October consisted of £60 for the molecatcher and £120 for the removal of the stump. Overall maintenance is likely to be around £200 less than budgeted because no play bark was purchased this year.

The projection for the expenditure on Administration is likely to be £50 more than the budgeted figure because of the cost of two encrypted flash drives to back up the Council laptop, which had not been budgeted for.

The projection for the expenditure on Other items is £425 less than budgeted because the new contractor does not charge separately for cutting the grass around the telephone box and £400 was budgeted for the Armistice 100 Commemoration but the Council only spent £41.

If the £2,000 budgeted for the repair of the multi-play is not spent this year, there will be a surplus of £1,400 instead of the budgeted deficit of £1,005. Together with the healthier position at the start of the year this means that the projected funds at the end of the year are around £8,950 – £3,550 better than expected when the budget was made. However, this is only because nothing is likely to be spent on the play equipment this year – but it will be needed next year.

It should be noted that approximately £1,000 of the figure will be earmarked for the allotments and £572 for the new play equipment.

13. Budget and Precept 2019/20

Enclosed is a budget for the year ending 31st March 2020. These accounts have two columns allowing the budget for 2019/20 to be compared to the projected figures for this year. Also enclosed is a forecast for the years 2018-2022. The next Parish Council election will take place in 2019/2020 and we need to budget to have sufficient reserves to pay for a contested election as well as any other contingencies such as a by-election. The figure of £1,200 for the cost of the election is an estimate based on the fact that the last contested election eleven years ago cost £933. We should also budget on the basis of making a contribution towards the cost of the new play equipment.

The budget and the forecast are produced on the basis of taking the projected figures for this year (apart from one-off expenditures) and adding small increases. These figures are not set in stone, and should be seen as the basis for discussion rather than final figures. It is for the Council to agree them or change them if they feel they are inadequate and additional expenditure needs to be made.

The VAT refund will be around £80 as little major works have been undertaken this year. The allotment rent will also be less than £350 if one or more allotments remain vacant.

Most items of expenditure have been assumed to be similar to this year with small increases where likely. The cost of the grass cutting will depend on the quotes obtained, but I've budgeted for a similar cost to that projected for this year. I've set the figure for equipment maintenance at £750. If the Council decides to replace most of the equipment this is unlikely to be needed. The Parish Council previously decided to budget £4,000 over two years for repairs to the multi-play equipment.

If this equipment is replaced that £4,000 can be put towards that cost along with the £572 raised at last year's Bingo evening. The budget doesn't include money raised for the play equipment in the future or any grants that may be received as we don't know how much these will be; we haven't yet decided what we are going to do; and they don't affect the precept unless we decide to make a larger contribution than the £4,000 already budgeted.

I've budgeted for a 2% increase in the Clerk's salary. The biggest unknown is the cost of a contested election if we have one - £1,200 is a guesstimate. The budget is an opportunity for the Council to review the level of its grants. I've had no indication of any additional items of expenditure in addition to those mentioned above.

Assuming that we spend £4,572 on new play equipment and have a contested election which costs £1,200 then we will have a deficit on the year of £4,200 - if we increase the precept to £9,750. This leaves £4,740 in our funds at the end of 2019/20. Given that around £900 of this will be earmarked for the allotments, this leaves us with reserves around the lower limit suggested by SALC (that a parish council's reserves should be between $\frac{1}{3}$ and $\frac{2}{3}$ of its precept) and should be sufficient to cover the cost of a by-election or a contested election costing more than anticipated.

Looking at the forecast for the years 2018-2022, I have allowed £500 year for unexpected/additional expenditure in 2020/21 and 2021/22. With no increases in the precept in these years, we would still have surpluses sufficient to build up reserves for the next election year.

This assumes that we obtain sufficient money from fundraising and grants to cover the cost of what we decide to do in the Playing Field. If we decide to increase the contribution made by the Parish Council we would need to increase the precept.

A decision on the level of the precept does not have to be made at this meeting - and can be deferred until the December meeting. Councillors may wish to wait until the tax base for 2019/20 has been determined in January so that we will know the impact any increase will have on Council Tax. (If the tax base goes up each household in the parish pays less for the same precept, whereas if the tax base goes down each household pays more.) Last year the tax base went down, so we reduced the increase in the precept. If the tax base goes down again, we can spread the increase in the precept over more than one year.

14. Authorisation of Payment

£???.00 Dominic Conway – Grass cutting in October. (*Invoice not yet received.*)
£100.00 Mrs E E Clarke – 5 moles caught in Playing Field.
£42.80 SSE – Electricity for Playing Field (July to October).

15. Other Business – matters of information only.

Suggestions for the Annual Parish meeting in April would be welcome.

16. Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 5th December 2018 at 7.30pm in the Old School.

Rob Sage

Rob Sage – Clerk

31st October 2018