

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 5th September 2018 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 8.00pm.

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

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage, Dick Skidmore – District Councillor and three members of the public. Nigel Hewitt-Cooper arrived during item 4576.

4575 – Apologies for Absence: Nigel Hewitt-Cooper – County Councillor had sent apologies for arriving late from another meeting. It was noted that Cllr Dick Skidmore was now the Chair of Mendip District Council.

4576 – Declarations of Interest: None.

4577 – Public Participation: None.

4578 – Minutes of the Meetings held on Wednesdays 4th July and 1st August 2018. The Minutes of both meetings were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4579 – Matters Arising: Unauthorised Camping – it was noted that the two caravans camped at the gravel store by the Hedgestocks crossroads had moved on after ten days. Mary Comley had e-mailed Somerset Highways who had placed a pile of road scrapings in the hole in the fence to prevent further access to their site. The Clerk to write a letter of thanks to the volunteer who had cleared up the rubbish from the site. Dick Skidmore was also thanked for his part in clearing up the rubbish.

4580 – Playing Field – New Play Equipment: It was agreed to bring this item forward. Clare Kingston noted that the Working Party was considering ideas for raising money for the new equipment and would like the Parish Council to apply for grants. The Working Party had also met with the representative of a play equipment provider who had provided a quote valid for two years for easy to maintain equipment, which included equipment accessible for a disabled child. It was noted that the Council would need to have three quotes to consider before making a decision. The Clerk reported that he had an offer from another play equipment company to provide a free quote on Tuesday September 18th and it was agreed that members of the Council and the Working Party would meet with this company's representative at 8.00am. It was also agreed that the Clerk should explore the initial stages of obtaining a grant from Viridor and the Big Lottery Fund.

4581 – Allotments: The Clerk reported that the owners of the allotment field were willing to lease the field for a further five years and had asked that the rent be increased by £20 a year to £220. This was agreed and it was also agreed that the Clerk should draw up a new lease for the owners to sign. The Clerk reported that he had had an enquiry about renting an allotment from someone in Bruton. As there were vacant allotments, it was agreed to allow this although Bruton was not a neighbouring parish.

4582 – Footpaths and Highways: There was no news yet as to whether Batcombe had been re-instated on the presalting network, but given the financial difficulties of the County Council this was felt to be unlikely.

There had also been no response from Somerset Highways to the request for the provision of a No HGV sign at the Hedgestocks crossroads, despite Mary Comley chasing the officer concerned. It was agreed to ask Somerset Highways for approval for the Parish Council to erect its own sign. Mary Comley to contact Somerset Highways.

Justin Witcombe reported that Somerset Highways had been jetting gulleys in the parish that week.

4583 – Emergency Plan: Justin Witcombe reported that the open meeting on Saturday September 15th to encourage volunteers to come forward to help in an emergency was going ahead. The Chairman noted that Working Parties made recommendations and decisions were made by the Parish Council. After discussion it was agreed to support the placing of a defibrillator at The Three Horseshoes, provided volunteers could raise the funds required. The landlord of The Three Horseshoes had afforded to sign an agreement to ensure the defibrillator could remain there even if the pub was sold. It was suggested that a friendly local solicitor could save the cost of paying for a contract to be drawn up.

4584 – Playing Field - Maintenance Report: The annual safety inspection of the Playing Field by RoSPA had taken place in July and Councillors had been sent a link to download the report with paper copies available at the meeting. Most items in the Playing Field were considered low or very low risk. Hedge growth was considered medium risk but had already been cut back. The zip wire was low risk but timber rot should be monitored and strimming around the supports avoided. The multiplay apparatus was medium risk with rotten timber needing replacing.

The moles had returned and it was agreed to employ the services of the molecatcher again. The Clerk noted that the Playing Field had been left in a good state after the Village Fete.

4585 – Planning Applications: There were no applications to consider.

Planning Application Updates: Planning permission had been granted for the horse arena at Baileys Lane Farm, on condition that no external lighting / floodlighting be erected and that the arena be for the private use of Baileys Lane Farm only. Planning permission had also been granted for the conversion of a redundant barn into a gym, games room and home office and the erection of a detached garage and greenhouse/potting shed at Lower Eastcombe Farm.

4586 – District and County Councillors' Reports: The District Councillor noted that the County Council had a problem with a debt of £350 million and favoured a unitary authority to spread the debt to the District Councils in a better financial position. The County Councillor noted that there had been some problems with refuse and recycling collections over the summer. Hinkley Point had caught up with its schedule over the summer and the quay should be operational next year. The Library Consultation had been completed but no decisions had been taken yet. Council meetings were going paperless (despite technical problems with Councillors' tablets) to save £60,000 a year spent on printing Agendas. He also noted that the social care bill was spiralling out of control.

4587 – 1918 Armistice Commemoration: The Chairman asked if the Council wished to contribute to the Commemoration of the 1918 Armistice. Options included the purchase of a silhouette or of a wreath for the Act of Remembrance on Remembrance Sunday. The

Chairman volunteered to speak to a local representative of the Royal British Legion about what might be appropriate.

4588 – Review of Standing Orders: The Parish Council’s Standing Orders were adopted in February 2014 and are based on a model produced by the National Association of Local Councils. It was noted that Standing Orders had been amended in 2016 to allow the electronic distribution of Agendas and papers to those Councillors who wished to receive them in this manner. It was also noted that the Standing Order that only allowed recording of the Council’s meetings with the prior written consent of the Council had been suspended because recording was now allowed under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014. No further amendments to Standings Orders were felt to be necessary.

4589 – GDPR – Document Retention Policy: A copy of a draft Document Retention Policy and an Appendix given details of how long different documents should be kept and the appropriate method of disposal had been distributed with the Agendas. These were based on models produced by the Society of Local Council Clerks and required to comply with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). One variation from the model was to keep the original Minutes of the Parish Council in the Batcombe Heritage Room (stored in a dehumidified fire-proof safe) rather than being deposited at the Taunton Heritage Centre – to allow for ease of access. It was agreed to adopt the Document Retention Policy and its Appendix.

4590 – Administration: The Chairman asked the remaining member of the public to leave and a resolution was passed excluding the public from the meeting. The Chairman asked the Clerk to leave the room and then tabled a paper on administrative matters. After the return of the Clerk, and on the Clerk’s advice, it was agreed the paper should be considered by the Staffing Committee, who would then report back to the full Council.

4391 – Bank Reconciliation and Budget Update: John Sommer reported to the meeting that he had checked the bank reconciliation prepared by the Clerk for the quarter to 30th June.

An update on the budget had been enclosed with the Agendas, and this showed the accounts for the previous year, the budget for the current year, receipts and payments to date in the current year and a projection for this year based on the receipts and payment to date. The Clerk reported that total receipts for the year were projected to be approximately £90 less than the budgeted figure because there were likely to be two vacant allotments in November and the VAT reclaimed had been less than expected.

The projection for the Playing Field expenditure was roughly as budgeted. Although the change of contractor meant the cost of grass cutting and hedge trimming would be higher than budgeted, the cost of maintenance would be lower because no additional play bark had been required. Other expenditure was likely to be roughly as budgeted with a projected deficit of £990 close to the budgeted figure of £1,005. However, the healthier position at the start of the year meant that the projected funds at the end of the year were around £6,585 – £1,180 better than expected when the budget was made. This was partly due to the £572 raised for new play equipment. The Clerk noted that around £1,000 of the figure would be earmarked for the allotments and £572 for new play equipment.

4592 - Authorisation of payment: Councillors authorised the following payments:
£160.00 Dominic Conway – Grass cutting in August.

4593 – Other Business - Matters of Information Only: One Love Festival – A letter of complaint had been received about excessive noise levels at the music festival, noting that the

noise monitor had found the noise to be above the permitted levels on the Sunday after which it had been reduced. Other complaints had been made on social media and to the Clerk. It was understood that residents had not received the letter giving them the numbers to report noise issues to.

Interruption of Electricity Supply – A letter had been received by residents informing them of an interruption to the electricity supply on Wednesday September 19th between 9.00am and 3.00pm to allow a transformer to be replaced. The Clerk was asked to put a note of this on the Parish Council website.

4594 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 3rd October 2018 at 8.00pm in the Old School Rooms, Batcombe.

John Sommer

3rd October 2018