

# BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

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**Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2018 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 8.00pm.**

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

**Also Present:** The Clerk – Rob Sage and five members of the public.

**4595 – Election of Chairman and Chairman’s Acceptance of Office:** The Vice Chairman chaired this item. It was noted that following the last meeting Chris Wildridge had resigned as Chairman due to ill health. John Sommer was willing to serve as Chairman until the May elections. He was proposed by Ian Sage, seconded by Mary Comley and, there being no other nominations, was duly elected and signed his Acceptance of Office.

**4596 – Election of Vice Chairman:** Justin Witcombe was willing to continue as Vice Chairman and so there was no need for an election.

**4597 – Apologies for Absence:** Chris Wildridge and Dick Skidmore – District Councillor.

**4598 – Declarations of Interest:** Ian Sage and Jayne Cox declared an interest in the authorisation of the Clerk’s salary and expenses as relatives of the Clerk. The Chairman declared a pecuniary interest in an item of Other Business concerning affordable housing.

**4599 – Public Participation:** Louise Nicholson expressed concern about the cutting down of a hedge in the Conservation Area. It was noted that planning permission was only required for tree works in a Conservation Area where the tree trunk was a certain diameter. Jenny Humphreys expressed concern about the parking at the Old Post Office and it was noted that this was difficult to address as the owners of the cars had nowhere else to park.

**4600 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> September 2018.** These were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**4601 – Matters Arising:** Allotments – The Clerk had drawn up a new lease and delivered it to the field owners to sign. Staffing Committee – a training session with a representative of the Somerset Association of Local Councils had been arranged to cover the issues raised at the last meeting.

**4602 – District and County Councillors’ Reports:** None.

**4603 – Footpaths and Highways:** There was no news yet as to whether Batcombe had been re-instated on the pre-salting network, but this was unlikely given that the County Council were planning to reduce the pre-salting network from 23 to 16 routes to save money. Concerns were raised about what would happen in bad weather if the main roads were not gritted.

There had also been no response from Somerset Highways to the request for the provision of a No HGV sign at the Hedgestocks crossroads. Mary Comley had discovered that the officer

responsible had retired and would try to track down whoever was now responsible. It was noted that approval was required from Somerset Highways for the Parish Council to erect its own sign.

It was reported that a car had apparently been abandoned at the top of Mill Lane.

**4604 – Emergency Plan:** Justin Witcombe reported on the open meeting in September arranged to encourage volunteers to come forward to help in an emergency. This was felt to be worthwhile as a trauma trained first aider and trainer for using a defibrillator had come forward along with other volunteers. Further volunteers had come forward at the Harvest Supper. The Clerk was asked to update the Emergency Plan with the details of the new volunteers.

It was suggested that a reminder should go in the parish magazine about the Priority Services Register for those such as the elderly and disabled who would receive support during a power cut.

**4605 – Playing Field - Maintenance Report:** The moles were very active in the Playing Field and Justin Witcombe volunteered to contact the mole catcher. It was noted that the rot in the multi-play apparatus needed careful monitoring to ensure the equipment was still safe to use.

**New Play Equipment:** Two additional play equipment companies had been asked to provide quotes similar to the one already obtained. The companies' representatives had visited the Playing Field but had not yet provided the quotes. The Clerk had looked into obtaining a grant from Viridor Credits and noted that the Council needed an idea of how much money would be coming from a third party, which included fundraising before it would know how much could be applied for. It was also suggested that a quote from the electricity provider be obtained for the moving of the stay next to the play equipment in the Playing Field.

**4606 – Planning Applications:** Planning Application No: 2018/2200/LBC – Alterations to conservatory roof and glazing and addition of solar panels. Re-siting of kitchen, creation of external doorway to include alterations to adjacent fenestration, and the provision of external stair and railings. Chandlers, Kale Street, Batcombe – Listed Building Consent.

Louise Nicholson spoke in support of her application which would replace an existing conservatory with one of the same size but with a slate roof and solar panels. It was noted that the conservatory had a prominent position in the Conservation Area and it was difficult to judge the impact of the solar panels from the details provided. The Parish Council decided to recommend approval but to add a note asking the Conservation Officer to ensure the solar panels were in keeping with the Conservation Area.

**Planning Application Updates:** The District Council had had no objection to tree works at Kings Hayes (Ref: 2018/2022/TCA) and at Batch Orchard (Ref: 2018/2061/TCA). The works at Kings Hayes consisted of a 30% height reduction (approximately 4m) and shaping of crown to a Holm Oak and 20% crown thin and crown lift to a maximum of 4m on two Sycamores. The works at Batch Orchard consisted of removing an Ash, a Birch, a Poplar and a Beech nearest the house; lifting and shaping the crown of a large beech; pollarding a Goat Willow; crown lifting a Weeping Willow; and pruning a group of specimen trees. The Parish Council had not been consulted on either application and the Clerk was asked to write to the Tree Officer asking that the Council be consulted in future.

**4607 – Review of Complaints Procedure and Code of Conduct:** It was noted that the Complaints Procedure only dealt with complaints about the administration and procedures of

the Parish Council. Complaints about the Clerk were an employment matter and would be dealt with by the Staffing Committee. Complaints about individual Councillors were dealt with under the Code of Conduct and investigated by the District Council's Monitoring Officer. It was agreed that there was no need to amend either the Complaints Procedure or the Code of Conduct.

The Clerk noted that a recent Court case (the Ledbury Town Council Judicial Review 2018) meant that any complaint by the Clerk about a Councillor had to be dealt with under the Code of Conduct by the Monitoring Officer and not under the Parish Council's own grievance procedure. The Society of Local Council Clerks recommended adopting a member/officer protocol to help avoid any such issues.

**4608 – 1918 Armistice Commemoration:** Chris Wildridge had suggested two options for commemorating the 1918 Armistice - the purchase of either a Perspex silhouette of a soldier or of a special wreath to be laid at the Act of Remembrance on Remembrance Sunday. The Clerk had spoken to local representatives of the Royal British Legion who favoured the purchase of a wreath from the Lady Haig Poppy Factory. It was agreed to purchase a wreath costing £36 plus £5 postage. In light of his seven and a half years' service as Chairman, it was agreed to ask Chris Wildridge if he would like to lay the wreath.

**4609 - Authorisation of payment:** Councillors authorised the following payments:

- £160.00 Dominic Conway – Grass cutting in September.
- £996.72 The Clerk – Salary for 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter.
- £181.58 The Clerk – Expenses for 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter.

**4610 – Other Business - Matters of Information Only:** 2019/20 Budget – Initial consideration of the budget for 2019/20 would take place at the next meeting and Councillors were asked to provide the Clerk with suggestions for any items of additional expenditure that might be needed.

The Chairman left the meeting for the following item. The Clerk reported receiving a letter from a resident of Westcombe asking the Parish Council to consider the setting up of a Community Land Trust to provide the affordable housing on the land offered by the Chairman. The Clerk noted that as the landowner was a member of the Parish Council, he could not be involved in discussions with the Parish Council as he had a pecuniary interest in decisions made by the Council.

**4611 – Date and Time of Next Meeting:** Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> November 2018 at **7.30pm** in the Old School Rooms, Batcombe.

John Sommer  
7/11/18