

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 5th December 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 7th November 2018 to be agreed and signed.
Enclosed.

5. Matters Arising – information updates only.
Nothing that does not appear on the Agenda below.

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 were due on November 1st. So far I have only received the rent for two allotments. I will chase up the allotment holders again before the meeting.

8. Emergency Plan and Proposed Defibrillator

The updated Emergency Plan should be available for adoption at the meeting. As it contains the personal details of those who have volunteered to assist in an emergency, circulation of the full emergency plan will be restricted.

If the Working Party is going to raise funds for a defibrillator, the Council needs to set terms of reference to ensure that there is no misunderstanding later on. If it is a Working Party of the Parish Council, it can raise funds (provided the Parish Council has asked it to do so) and can make proposals for the location and the purchase of a defibrillator – but it is the Parish Council that makes decisions, purchases the defibrillator and is responsible for it. Previously it has been decided that

The Three Horseshoes would be the best location – the exact location can be decided later. One question to be considered is whether the Working Party will be responsible for the maintenance of the defibrillator (it needs to be checked regularly if it is going to work when needed) or whether that responsibility will fall on the Parish Council. This should be settled before the Parish Council agrees to funds being raised. It would also be helpful for the Parish Council to know who the members of the Working Party are.

9. Footpaths and Highways

There have been two road closures in the parish (one on Westcombe Hill and the other on Saite Lane) which the Parish Council has not been notified about.

Parish Paths Consultation – Somerset County Council is undertaking a Parish Paths Consultation to determine whether the nature and use of paths has changed since the last consultation 12 years ago. We are asked to complete a spreadsheet with amendments and comments by the deadline of January 31st. Enclosed is a spreadsheet with a list of the current paths in the parish and their category (rated from 1 to 3 depending on how frequently they are used). Also enclosed is a map showing the locations of the paths. Comments on whether path categories should be amended are welcome.

10. Playing Field

Maintenance Report – *No sign of molehills. The water has been turned off in the Playing Field. Do we wish to obtain additional quotes for the cutting of the grass next season – in addition to one from Dominic Conway? Do we want Gary Butler to cut the top of the willow structure as last year (when it cost £75)?*

Electricity Supply Contract – *From November the standing charge for the supply of electricity to the Playing Field increased from 19.61p per day to 42.42p per day. For a three-year fixed contract with SSE, the standing charge would be £21.35 a quarter (or 23.4p per day). The price of the electricity would increase from 13.39p per unit to 15.068p per unit, but we would still save roughly £200 over the three years. To enter into the contract we would need to pay by Direct Debit. I will need to check the prices before the meeting as these may vary. This is a Green energy contract which will cost an extra 11p over the three years.*

New Play Equipment – *The Bingo Evening to raise money for the new play equipment will take place on December 1st and Clare Kingston would appreciate support on the evening. After the Bingo Evening the Council will have a better idea of how much money has been raised by fundraising for the new equipment. In addition to the £572 raised at last year's Bingo Evening, £405 was donated at the Harvest Supper and £150 given by the PCC for the use of the Playing Field for the Annual Fete. It would be good to arrange a date for the Working Party to meet, consider the quotes and the way forward with regard to grant applications.*

11. Planning Applications:

Planning Application No: 2018/2847/TCA Proposed works to trees in a conservation area – T1-T4 Yew trees – topped to 15ft poles. T5 Cryptomeria – Felled.
Little Court, Gold Hill, Batcombe – Works/Felling Trees in a CA

Planning Application Updates.

The District Council had no objections to the felling of the Eucalyptus tree at Fir Tree Cottage. Listed Building Consent has been granted for the alterations to the conservatory roof and glazing; re-siting of kitchen, creation of an external doorway and provision of external stairs and railings at Chandlers on Kale Street. The application had been amended to remove the addition of solar panels to the conservatory roof which was the item the Parish Council had raised a concern about.

12. Annual Parish Meeting

To consider an offer by the Clerk to produce a presentation for the Annual Parish Meeting on the last 125 years of the parish using photographs from the Heritage Room. This would illustrate changes within the parish since the Parish Council was formed in 1894 and hopefully attract some interest from residents of the parish.

13. Consultation on the Somerset Homelessness Strategy

The five District Councils in Somerset are currently drafting their Homelessness Strategy for 2019-2024 and are seeking to consult with their stakeholders. A link to an online survey has been sent to Parish Councillors with e-mail. There will also be a number of consultation events and the one in Mendip will take place at the Council Chamber on Thursday December 13th, 2.30pm-4.30pm. Chris Wildridge has offered to represent the Parish Council at this event but would like some guidance on the Parish Council's views on the consultation.

14. Review of the Media Policy and Social Media Policy

We are reviewing all our policies prior to the Parish Council election in May and this month we will consider the Media Policy and the Social Media Policy (copies enclosed). Councillors should be familiar with the policies, particularly with the Social Media Policy if they post items on social media. I am not aware of any need to amend either policy, but if Councillors feel any amendments are needed, please let the Clerk know before the meeting.

15. Administration – Staffing Committee

To consider adopting terms of reference for the Standing Committee as recommended by Justin Robinson of the Somerset Association of Local Councils. This follows the training session attended by members of the Staffing Committee.

16. Budget and Precept 2019/20 – Request from the Batcombe Hub

The Batcombe Hub meets in the Fulford Room of the Old School for two hours on a Friday morning and offers coffee, cake and a place to meet. The organisers have asked if the Parish Council would pay for the room hire charge of £6 a week as they do not get enough from donations to cover the cost of the refreshments and the room hire. This would cost over £300 a year, although the Hub is not meeting in December which would reduce this cost. The Parish Council has the power to provide premises for clubs and social organisations so is able to do this. Should the Parish Council agree to this request we would need to increase the precept by £300 a year.

Other than the above request there have been no other changes to the budget proposed at the last meeting. Please bring with you the Budget and Forecast provided with last month's Agenda. If you no longer have these they can be downloaded from the Parish Council website. The notes below are a brief summary of those in the November Agenda and do not include the cost of supporting the Hub.

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.

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.

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 should be made in principle at this meeting (just in case we are snowed in in January) but Councillors may wish to defer a final decision 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.

17. Authorisation of Payment

£???.00 Dominic Conway – Grass cutting in November. (*Invoice not yet received.*)

£50.00 Gary Butler – Hedge cutting in allotments Field.

18. Other Business – matters of information only.

The Annual General Meeting of the Somerset Association of Local Councils will take place on Monday 18th December at 6.00pm in the Edgar Hall at Somerset. (Mince pies and refreshments available from 5.30pm.) As a member Council we are entitled to send two representatives (although we haven't previously done so). The main business of the meeting (other than the usual elections and reports) will be to consider establishing a limited company (Somerset Association of Local Councils Limited) to replace the current Association.

SALC have informed us that The Public Sector Bodies (websites and mobile applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018 came into force on 23rd September this year. These regulations mean that we have to check that our website is accessible to disabled people. If our website is not already accessible, we have until 23rd September 2020 to make it so.

19. Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 9th January 2019 at 7.30pm in the Old School.

Rob Sage

Rob Sage – Clerk

28th November 2018