

# BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

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## Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2018 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 7.30pm.

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

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

**4628 – Apologies for Absence:** Chris Wildridge and Nigel Hewitt-Cooper – County Councillor.

**4629 – Declarations of Interest:** None.

**4630 – Public Participation:** None.

**4631 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> November 2018.** These were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**4632 – Matters Arising:** None.

**4633 – District and County Councillors' Reports:** The District Councillor noted that the District and County Councils were trying very hard to do their duties. There were issues in the District Council with planning staff coming and going and the Council was having to use agency staff which was not ideal as they would often leave midway through an application. The unitary proposal was still being considered as the County Council had problems with its debt.

**4634 – Highways:** This item was brought forward to allow the District Councillor to comment before leaving. The District Councillor felt that the removal of the Bruton/Evercreech road from the pre-salting network would cause problems. Jayne Cox asked if the County Council could be held responsible for accidents. Justin Witcombe suggested the Parish Council employ someone to do the gritting or pay the County Council's contractors to do so. The Chairman reported that he had spoken to Evercreech Parish Council who would consider working with Batcombe to buy salt in bulk but not to pay for the pre-salting of the road. The Clerk reported that he had contacted Charlie Higgins at Somerset Highways and the Parish Council could pay for someone to salt the roads but they would have to be insured and Chapter 8 accredited to work on the roads. Somerset Highways would provide the Parish Council with details of the options available. Charlie Higgins had also offered the Parish Council two 1 ton Dumpy bags of salt (which would cost £200 next year) and this offer was accepted. It was agreed to consider the options available at the January meeting.

**4635 – Budget and Precept 2019/20 – Request from the Batcombe Hub:** Olivia Spencer noted that the Batcombe Hub was an open house for tea, coffee and conversation that met on a Friday morning in the Old School. The numbers attending varied. It cost £6 a week to rent the room and the donations received did not cover this cost and the cost of heating and

refreshments. The organisers had requested that the Parish Council meet the cost of paying for the room. Councillors felt that if everyone attending was asked to donate a £1 (as many similar organisations did) that should cover the costs. It was decided not to support the Hub financial as if the Council did it for one organisation, there would be an expectation that they would do it for others.

**4636 – Allotments:** The Clerk reported that, although the allotment rents were due on November 1<sup>st</sup>, only three had been paid so far. The Clerk was asked to chase up the outstanding rents.

**4637 – Emergency Plan and Proposed Defibrillator:** The Chairman proposed that in future these two items be considered separately and this was agreed. Justin Witcombe reported that Philip Clarke was willing to be on the Community Emergency Management Team and the Emergency Plan was adopted with the addition of Philip Clarke's name. It was agreed that the Emergency Plan should be revised after the Parish Council elections in May. The Working Party to consist of the Clerk, the Chairman, Justin Witcombe and Mark Ellis.

**4638 – Footpaths:** Somerset County Council was undertaking a Parish Paths Consultation to determine whether the nature and use of paths had changed since the last consultation 12 years ago. The Parish Council had received a request from a Mr Leslie Stather to reclassify footpath WN4/12 (currently category 3) as category 2 as together with the footpath SM 2/22, which was currently category 2, these made a route from Saite Lane to Hassocks Lane. The Council agreed with this. Mr Stather also noted that footpath SM2/2 to Lower Alham Farm was blocked if a lack of action on this blockage was due to its classification as category 3. The Council felt the classification was due to the fact that most people would use the lane to Lower Alham Farm rather than the footpath. It was noted that nothing had been done about the blockage of the footpath at Pugh's Bottom Farm.

**4639 – Playing Field - Maintenance Report:** There were no signs of molehills in the Playing Field and the water had been turned off for the winter. The Clerk was asked to obtain three quotes for cutting the grass in the Playing Field from Dominic Conway, Gary Butler and from a grounds maintenance company. It was agreed to ask Gary Butler to cut the top of the willow structure. It was noted that the picnic table needed preservative applied and it was agreed to consider highering the bench at a later date.

**Electricity Supply Contract** - The Clerk reported that for a three-year fixed contract with SSE, the standing charge would be £21.35 a quarter (or 23.4p per day instead of the current 42.42p 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. The Council agreed to enter into the contract and authorised the Clerk to sign the contract. The Council also agreed to pay future electricity bill by Direct Debit, which was one of the terms of the contract. This was a Green energy contract which would cost an extra 11p over the three years.

**New Play Equipment** – The Bingo Evening on December 1<sup>st</sup> had raised £1,121 for the new play equipment which meant that a total of £2,248 had now been raised. Clare Kingston was thanked for organising the Bingo Evening. The Working Party was asked to meet before Christmas to consider the quotes provided for the play equipment and the way forward with grant applications. It was decided to go ahead with the application for a grant from Tesco.

**4640 – 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. As the application

did not give reasons for the tree works the Parish Council decided to leave the decision to the District Council's Tree Officer.

**Planning Application Updates:** The District Council had had no objections to the felling of the Eucalyptus tree at Fir Tree Cottage. Listed Building Consent had 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.

Justin Witcombe reported that the Ash tree at Ash Tree Cottages had a fungal infection. As it was considered dangerous to life and property the Tree Officer had given permission for it to be felled without consulting the Parish Council.

**4641 – Annual Parish Meeting:** The Clerk had offered to produce a presentation for the Annual Parish Meeting on the last 125 years of the parish using photographs from the Heritage Room, which would illustrate changes within the parish since the Parish Council was formed in 1894. The offer was accepted and Mary Comley suggested the presentation should explain what existed before the Parish Council. It was also suggested that the presentation be advertised through flyers around the parish.

**4642 – Consultation on the Somerset Homelessness Strategy:** The five District Councils in Somerset were currently drafting their Homelessness Strategy for 2019-2024 and were seeking to consult with their stakeholders. A link to an online survey had been sent to Parish Councillors with e-mail. Chris Wildridge had offered to represent the Parish Council at consultation event in the Mendip Council Chamber on December 13<sup>th</sup> and this was accepted. The Parish Council did not have any views to express on homelessness as there was little experience of it in Batcombe.

**4643 – Review of the Media Policy and the Social Media Policy:** No amendments were felt to be necessary to either the Media Policy or the Social Media Policy. It was not that Councillors should be familiar with the Social Media Policy if they posted items online.

**4644 – Budget and Precept 2019/20:** The budget and precept for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 had been discussed at the previous meeting. There were no changes to the proposed budget, although Chris Wildridge had asked the Council to budget for the provision of gritting by the Parish Council. A decision on the precept was deferred to the January meeting when the Council would have details of any change in the tax base and of the options available for gritting by the Parish Council.

**4645 - Authorisation of payment:** Councillors authorised the following payments:

£80.00 Dominic Conway – Grass cutting in November.

£50.00 Gary Butler – Hedge cutting in the allotments field.

**4646 – Other Business - Matters of Information Only:** The Clerk noted that the Annual General Meeting of the Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC) would take place on 18<sup>th</sup> December and the Parish Council were entitled to send two representatives. The Clerk also reported that SALC had informed the Parish Council that *The Public Sector Bodies (websites and mobile applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018* came into force on 23<sup>rd</sup> September. These regulations meant that the Council had to check that its website was

accessible to disabled people. If not already accessible, the Council had until 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2020 to make it so.

It was noted that Rob Jones had proposed a maintenance schedule for the Batcombe War Memorial. Mary Comley reported that Somerset Highways had suggested that the No HGV sign at the entry to Copplesbury Lane be re-sited with another on the opposite side of the road to indicate that no HGVs should enter Batcombe from the Hedgestocks crossroads. As one of these signs would be in Milton Clevedon parish, agreement from Milton Clevedon would be needed.

**4647 – Date and Time of Next Meeting:** Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2019 at 7.30pm in the Old School Rooms, Batcombe.

*John Sommer*

*9/1/19*