

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 6th March 2019 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 7.30pm.

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

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage, and one member of the public.

4688 – Apologies for Absence: None.

4689 – Declarations of Interest: Justin Witcombe declared an interest in item 4695 as an allotment holder.

4690 – Public Participation: None.

4691 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 6th February 2019. These were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4692 – Matters Arising: Shindig Weekender Licence Application – The organisers of Shindig had lodged an appeal against this decision and a preliminary hearing was set for 28th March at Taunton Deane and West Somerset Magistrates Court. Chris Wildridge volunteered to attend this hearing on behalf of the Parish Council, but it was noted that it was unlikely that the Parish Council would have the opportunity to be heard at the hearing. It was agreed that Chris should liaise with the Clerk as to whether it would be worth attending nearer the date of the hearing. Chris expressed his view that the Shindig organisers would have been working hard with the District Council and the police to reverse the original decision.

4693 – District and County Councillors' Reports: Copies of the County Councillor's February update had been distributed to Parish Councillors with the Agenda and his March update had since been e-mailed to Parish Councillors. Chris Wildridge noted that the County Council had immense financial problems, which reflected a national problem with Council funding. It was noted that the reduction in the pre-salting network was to be reviewed. Justin Witcombe noted that most of the salt in the dumpy bag on Hincombe Hill had been used in the cold weather in February and it was agreed to put the extra salt bags the Parish Council had stored in the dumpy bag in case of further icy weather.

4694 – Parish Council Elections: The Clerk noted that Parish Council and District Council elections would take place on Thursday May 2nd 2019 and the newly elected Councillors would take office on Tuesday May 7th. The Notice of Election would be published on Monday March 18th and prospective candidates had from the following day (March 19th) to 4.00pm on Wednesday 3rd April to submit their nominations by hand to the Returning Officer. Candidates were advised to submit early in case an error is found in their nomination. Nomination packs could be downloaded from the District Council website along with guidance for candidates.

4695 – Allotments: The Clerk reported that only four allotments rents had been received with one other allotment holder promising to pay for one or possibly two allotments. The Clerk was asked to ensure that the allotment holders who had given up their allotments had removed all their belongings. With four or five vacant allotments the Council felt that the allotments were no longer viable.

The Clerk had spoken to the owners of the allotment field, who were flexible willing to sign a two-year lease instead of the new five-year lease from May that had been agreed. This would allow the Parish Council to give the remaining allotment holders a year's notice from next November and then return the field to its original condition. The Council agreed to take out a two-year lease and then decide before November whether to give notice to the remaining allotment holders.

The Council also agreed to sheet down the vacant allotments to prevent the growth of weeds. Justin Witcombe had purchased some black plastic sheeting which the Council would pay for.

4696 – Footpaths and Highways: The Clerk reported that he had still not received a response from the County Council regarding the options available to the Parish Council for organising our own pre-salting of the roads, despite a direct request to the officer concerned. This was felt to be unacceptable and the Clerk was asked to ask the County Councillor to follow this up.

4697 – Playing Field - Maintenance Report: There were still no signs of molehills in the Playing Field. It was noted that there were fungi growing on some of the wood on the multi-play and it was agreed to treat the wood. A working party would be arranged when there was some better weather.

Annual Village Fete – The organisers of the Village Fete had requested that they be allowed to hold the Fete on the Sunday of the August Bank Holiday weekend instead of on the Monday and this was agreed. This would allow for a fundraising event for the Playing Field on the Sunday evening and for the clear up to take place on the Monday when it was hoped more volunteers would be available.

New Play Equipment – The Working Party had met in February and proposed that the replacement play equipment should be made from steel rather than wood as this would ensure that it would last much longer and need less maintenance. This would roughly double the cost of the equipment so more fundraising would be needed over the coming year. The Council endorsed the Working Party's proposal.

4698 – Planning Applications: Planning Application 2019/0150/LBC – Demolition of existing single storey extension and first floor roof. Construction of new single storey extension and dormer roof to existing dwelling. Mole Cottage, Kale Street, Batcombe – Listed Building Consent. Planning permission and Listed Building Consent had been granted in June 2018 for the alterations described above. The following alterations to the planning permission were granted as non-material amendments in December 2018: “alteration to the rear elevation to change a large picture window and separate external glazed door to an integrated steel framed glazed screen and double doors to the external courtyard”; and “proposed roof finishes including the green roof and standing seam zinc roofing is to be replaced with lead roofs”. The current application sought Listed Building Consent for the amended proposals. The Parish Council recommended approval as there were no objections to the amendments.

Planning Application 2019/0239/TCA – Proposed works to trees in a conservation area:- T1 – Ash (A1) – reduce up 4m height. T2 – Ash (A2) – Fell. T3-T4 – Beech (B1 and B2) – Fell.

Land to the Rear of Paddock House, Mill Lane, Batcombe – Works/Felling Trees in a CA. The Parish Council recommended approval as there were no objections to the proposed tree works.

Planning Application Updates: There were no updates to note. The Clerk reported that the District Council was planning to offer training to parish councillors on planning applications and the planning system that would begin after the election.

4699 – Review of Schedule of Assets - A copy of the Schedule of Assets had been distributed with the Agendas. There were no changes to the Schedule from the previous year.

4700 – Annual Parish Meeting - The Annual Parish Meeting would take place on Wednesday April 3rd. Concerns had been raised after the previous year’s meeting that the reading of the previous year’s Minutes was not the most stimulating way of starting the meeting, especially as the Chairman’s report then covered much of the same material. This year’s meeting would be asked if they would agree that in future years the Minutes of the previous year’s meeting could be published on the Parish Council website and taken as read.

Councillors volunteered to provide refreshments for the meeting.

4701 - Authorisation of payment: Councillors authorised the following payments:

£24.39 SSE – Playing Field Electricity (31/10/18 – 13/12/18)

This was the final bill for the period before the new contract and payment by Direct Debit came into effect.

4702 – Other Business - Matters of Information Only: Death of a Senior Figure – The Parish Council had received a letter from Mendip District Council asking what arrangements were in place for marking the death of a senior figure in a time of national mourning. It was agreed that the Clerk should liaise with the Church as to what arrangements they had in place such as the flying of the flag at half-mast and having a book of condolence to sign.

Chris Wildridge gave his apologies for the April meeting and thanked members of the Council for their support over the last eight years. He suggested that the newly elected Council should only elect a Chairman for a year at a time to share responsibilities and that the new Council should adopt a four-year plan of priorities. He also asked the Parish Council to consider any conflict of interest that might arise from the Council having representatives on the Village Hall Trust and the Heritage Room.

Justin Witcombe noted that a car parked on Walters Lane had been broken into. It was also noted that the electricity supply had been removed from the Westcombe telephone kiosk and that in the process the cover had been damaged. As the kiosk was a listed building the Clerk was asked to contact BT to see if they would repair the damage. It was also noted that the Batcombe telephone kiosk had been removed.

4703 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 3rd April 2019 at 6.45pm in the Jubilee Hall, Batcombe to be followed by the Annual Parish Meeting at 7.30pm

John Sommer
03/04/19