

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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You are Summoned to the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council to be held on Wednesday 5th June 2019 at 8.00pm 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 Meeting held on Wednesday 8th May 2019 to be agreed and signed. *Enclosed.*

5. Matters Arising – information updates only.

Sewage Treatment Plant at Ash Tree Cottages – Justin Witcombe has forwarded a copy of correspondence from Hastoes showing that they are aware of the problem and are planning to deal with it. The problem is that the outflow pipe has silted up which causes the treatment plant to back up and not work properly. They will replace the outflow pipe and overhaul the treatment plant and hope this will solve the problem. If not, they will need to replace the plant.

Electricity Network Upgrade – the work to upgrade the local electricity network with replacement transformers, poles and lines went very smoothly and Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks took great to ensure people of what was happening.

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

Three of the vacant allotments have now been taken by residents of Wanstrow, and in line with previous practice, the rent was reduced to £20 for the remainder of the year until November. We had another inquiry from Wanstrow but that does not appear to have come to anything. This leaves us with two vacant allotments. Thanks to Justin who tidied up the former compost heap in the end corner of the allotments field and the two allotments at that end of the field. (One of these was taken shortly afterwards).

8. Footpaths and Highways

Footpaths – It has been suggested that the Parish Council should take steps to publicise the existence of the footpaths and other rights of way in the parish. There was an issue with the Shindig festival of people trespassing on farm land in an attempt to reach the festival site.

Highways - The reduction in the pre-salting network is being reviewed over the summer and our County Councillor has promised to chase up Somerset Highways with regards to the options that we have to do our own salting.

9. Playground - Maintenance Report.

The annual inspection of the Playing Field by RoSPA will take place in June. As well as the annual inspection, the Playing Field should be inspected weekly, particularly during the summer to pick up on any safety issues. The weekly inspection is currently undertaken by the Clerk, but could be done by a Councillor (and has been in the past). There is a form to assist with the inspection.

A meeting of the Working Party to consider fundraising for the new play equipment is being arranged.

10. Planning Applications:

Planning Application 2018/0450/FUL – Removal of caravan adjacent to outbuilding and conversion of outbuilding to create staff accommodation, single storey extension to outbuilding as amended by revised drawings received on 29 April 2019. The Three Horseshoes, Batcombe – Full Application.

The Parish Council considered the original application in April 2018 and recommended approval with a request for a condition that the accommodation should be ancillary to the pub (i.e. not be allowed to be sold separately). The amended drawings show a different internal layout and a pitched roof on most of the extension to match that on the outbuilding (original the extension had a flat roof). The original plans incorporated a small corner of the pub garden into the building and this is no longer the case. The Parish Council has been granted an extension to the consultation deadline to consider the amendments at this meeting.

Planning Application 2019/1073/FUL – Remove existing derelict building and replace with new agricultural store. Lower Farm, Horsehill Lane, Batcombe – Full Application.

The application is to remove an existing shed and replace it with a new implement store. The shed is the one alongside the road in the orchard on the opposite side of the road from the rest of the Lower Farm buildings. The new store will be larger than the existing shed.

Planning Application 2019/1136/HSE – Erection of a rear single storey extension. Cherry Tree Cottage, Batcombe BA4 6HD – Householder Application.

Cherry Tree Cottage is the cottage next to Boords Farm. We should have plans by the date of the meeting.

Plans for these applications can be viewed for half an hour before the meeting or online at the District Council's Planning website <https://publicaccess.mendip.gov.uk/online-applications/> Just enter the planning application reference number in the search engine.

Planning Application Updates.

There are no updates to report.

11. Review of Financial Regulations

Our Financial Regulations (copy enclosed) were adopted in June 2014 and are based on a model produced by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), with some amendments agreed by the Council where the model was not appropriate for a small Parish Council. Certain figures in the Regulations are set by the Council and should be reviewed annually. These are:

1.14 – ii) *The suggested figure in the model was £5,000 (presumably based on a large town council with committees that have delegated powers to spend up to this amount.) The Council agreed £100 to cover items paid for by the Clerk and then reclaimed such as stamps. The same figure is used in Regulation 4.1.*

4.5 - *£500 is the figure recommended in the model regulations. This would allow for emergency safety work to be carried out in the Playing Field.*

4.8 – *The recommended figures for reporting variances against budget (£100 or 15% of the budget) seem appropriate.*

5.5 c) – *The figure of £10,000 allows the Clerk to transfer the precept to the reserve bank account (at the same bank) to earn interest.*

6.18 – *The limit for transactions on a debit card issued to the Clerk is academic as no such card has been issued.*

11.1 – *The figure of £60,000 is the EU Procurement threshold.*

12.2 – *The figure in the model was £250. £25 means that the sale of any moveable property would need to be authorised by the Council.*

12. Review of the Effectiveness of the System of Internal Control, Internal Auditor's Report and Certificate of Exemption from a Limited Assurance Review

Our Financial Regulations (1.5) require a review of the effectiveness of our system of internal control before approving the Annual Governance Statement which forms part of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (see below). I believe our system of internal control to be more than sufficient for a small Parish Council. The details are given in the Financial Regulations. These include the budgetary process, the authorisation of all payments by the Council, the signing of cheques at Council meetings by two Councillors, who have to initial the cheque stubs and invoices, the quarterly bank reconciliations and the requirement for an internal audit.

This year our internal audit was undertaken by Griff Williams, who satisfies the necessary requirements of independence of the Parish Council and competence. A copy of the Internal Audit Report is enclosed. All the internal control objectives were achieved, with the exception of petty cash payments which was "not covered" because the Council does not make any petty cash payments.

Parish Councils, whose income and expenditure are both less than £25,000, do not have to send the Annual Return to the external auditor provided they send the external auditor a certificate of exemption (copy enclosed) signed at this meeting and publish the Annual Return on their website by July 1st.

13. Annual Return Section 1 – Approval of Annual Governance Statement 2018/19

Section 1 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is the Annual Governance Statement (copy enclosed). This has to be approved by the Council before the Council approves the Accounting Statements with a separate Minute reference. I believe the Council can agree all eight statements.

Note: Statement 4 - The Parish Council's accounts have to be available for public inspection for 30 working days that include the first ten working days in July.

14. Annual Return Section 2 – Approval of Accounting Statements 2018/19

Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is the Statement of Accounts (copy enclosed) which has to be approved by the Council. The enclosed Financial Statements for last year show how the figures in the Statement of Accounts have been derived – the circled numbers refer to the boxes in the Statement of Accounts. There is a significant variation in boxes 3 between the figures for last year and those for the previous year. This is due to the money raised for the new play

equipment being £1,676 in 2018/19 compared to £572 in 2017/18. The value of fixed assets in box 9 is obtained from the Schedule of Assets and is unchanged.

The Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities requires that signed copies of the Statement of Accounts, the Annual Governance Statement and the Internal Auditor's Report have to be published on the Parish Council website no later than July 1st, along with a bank reconciliation and details of all items of expenditure over £100 and any land assets.

15. Annual Grants from the Parish Council

The Parish Council has budgeted for a grant of £300 to the Village Hall (£150 for our own meetings and £150 for committee meetings of other village organisations); for a grant of £200 to the Parochial Church Council for the maintenance of the churchyard and £200 for smaller grants to charities. For several years the Council has given two grants of £100 to Mendip Community Transport and Mendip Citizens Advice Bureau. In the past we have supported Victim Support Somerset; Mendip RELATE; the Bruton Carers Group; St Margaret's Somerset Hospice and Somerset Art Works.

The Council has the power to support the Village Hall Trust, to help maintain the churchyard, and to support the Citizens Advice Bureau, but grants to other charities must be made by a specific resolution under the section 137 power, which allows the Council to spend a limited sum on items in the interest of parishioners which it has no specific power to support.

16. Authorisation of Payment

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

Somerset Playing Fields Association - £15.00 – Annual Subscription.

Plus any grants approved under item 16. If the bank mandate has not been changed by the time of the meeting, special arrangements may be to be made for payments that cannot be delayed.

17. Other Business – matters of information only.

Please note that the Parish Council cannot make decisions on items that do not appear on the Agenda – so matters raised under this item are for information only.

The Somerset Association of Local Councils is offering training for new Councillors (also suitable as a refresher for old Councillors). The training lasts two hours from 7.00pm and is available at the following locations: Nunney Village Hall on June 17th; Wookey Village Hall on June 19th; Charlton Musgrove Village Hall on June 27th; and Beckington Memorial Hall on July 22nd. The cost is £25 which will be paid by the Parish Council. If four Councillors go on the same evening, we get one place free. The training covers the basics that all Councillors should know.

A parishioner has raised a concern about the status of the Heritage Room. It was originally planned that the Heritage Room would become a charitable Trust, like the Village Hall Trust. However, it was decided that it would be simpler for the Heritage Room to come under the umbrella of the Village Hall Trust who own the actual room. The Parish Council's interest in the Heritage Room is that it stores many significant records of the parish including past Minutes of the Parish Council. The Parish Council has no financial liability as the Heritage Room is funded by donations.

18. Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 3rd July 2019 at 8.00pm in the Old School.

Rob Sage

Rob Sage – Clerk

29th May 2019