

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

Tel: 01749 850934

e-mail: clerk@batcombe-parish-council-somerset.org.uk

Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 3rd July 2019 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 8.00pm.

Present - Councillors: Mary Comley – Chairman, Jayne Cox, Peter Glaisher, Janet Jones, Ian Sage, David Stevens, and Justin Witcombe.

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage and the District Councillor – Michael Gay.

4752 – Apologies for Absence: Apologies had been received from Nigel Hewitt-Cooper, the County Councillor.

4753 – Declarations of Interest: Ian Sage and Jayne Cox declared an interest in the payment of the Clerk’s salary and expenses as relatives of the Clerk. Justin Witcombe declared an interest in the items on the allotments and the sewage treatment plant at Ash Tree Cottages under Matters Arising as an allotment holder and as a resident of the Cottages.

4754 – Public Participation: None.

4755 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 5th June 2019. These were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The Chairman proposed that in future the Minutes should include Action Points and this was agreed. The Clerk noted that the latest legal advice from the National Association of Local Councils was that no names should be recorded in the Minutes under Public Participation unless the consent of the participant had been received. It was agreed that in future all participants would be referred to as “a resident”. **Action: The Clerk.**

4756 – Matters Arising: Annual Governance and Accountability Return – The Clerk reported that the Certificate of Exemption has been sent to the External Auditor, PKF Littlejohn LLP, and acknowledged. The Internal Auditor’s Report, Annual Governance Statement, Annual Accounting Statements 2018/19 and the other documents that the Parish Council were required to publish had all been placed on the Parish Council website before the deadline of July 1st. The Notice of the Period for the Exercise of Public Rights, when members of the public can examine the Parish Council’s accounting records, had also been published on the website and on the parish notice boards.

Allotments – The Clerk reported that all the allotments were now rented out with the vacant allotments having been leased at the reduced rent of £20 for the remainder of the year (until November 1st).

Sewage Treatment Plant at Ash Tree Cottages – Hastoes had informed the residents that they are making arrangements for the repair of the plant and in the meantime the sewage tank was being regularly emptied. The Parish Council Chairman had been in contact with the Repairs Operations Manager at Hastoes who stated that a contractor had visited in May to provide quotes for replacing the outflow pipe and the whole system if necessary. Because of the high cost Hastoes had engaging a consultant to report on whether replacing the outfall pipe will provide a suitable solution or whether it will be necessary to replace the whole system. The consultant was expected to visit at the end of June. **Action: The Chairman** to keep up to date with the Repairs Operations Manager.

A former Parish Councillor had suggested that the Section 106 agreement on the houses meant that the Parish Council should be more involved in this issue. The Clerk noted that the Section 106 agreement is the legal agreement by which priority in the occupation of the houses was given to those with a local connection. The Parish Council had been consulted on the localness of those wishing to live there and had also recommended local people with a housing need to Hastoës. The Section 106 agreement did not give the Parish Council any other role in the management of the houses.

Councillor Training – Four Councillors had attended the training for new Councillors at Nunney Village Hall in June and found it a useful session if a little long.

4758 – District and County Councillors’ Reports: The District Councillor noted that getting Parish Councils more involved was no longer a focus of the Scrutiny Board and he felt that the ideas that had been put forward needed to be implemented. The Cabinet had approved consultancy work on flood risk assessment, on landscape character assessment and the impact on development, and on highways assessment with the possibility of a new road around Pilton. Questioned where the new road would be funded by the Government, he stated that there was money available. The District Councillor also reported that Witham Friary and Wanstrow Parish Councils were developing climate resilience plans, planning for a carbon neutral future and for climate resilience. He noted that the District Council had declared a climate emergency. The Parish Council asked to be kept informed of Wanstrow’s progress.

4759 – Broadband Provision – Connecting Devon and Somerset: The District Council’s Scrutiny Committee would be examining the provision of high-speed broadband in the Mendip area by Connecting Devon and Somerset at its meeting in August and Janet Jones provided a series of suggested questions to ask CDS at this meeting, noting that Gigaclear were significantly behind schedule in its contracts to provide high speed broadband and had provided little or no broadband in the Mendip area. Janet felt that Truespeed was probably the best hope for highspeed broadband in this area. Jayne Cox noted the concerns being raised about 5G phone signals.

4760 – Footpaths and Highways: Somerset Highways had informed the Parish Council that Quaperlake Street in Bruton would be closed for 3 days from 24th July 2019 to enable Wessex Water to carry out new connection works. It was noted that in the past the closure of Quaperlake Street had meant increased traffic through Batcombe.

The Clerk stated that he had sent a reminder to Somerset Highways of the conditions in Batcombe in icy weather and of the request for the options the Parish Council has with regard to salting the roads and this had been copied to the County Councillor. No response had been received from the officer at Somerset Highways. The Chairman stated that she had also left a message for the officer concerned and had not received a response. The Clerk was asked to keep up the pressure and to ask for some free bags of salt given the particular situation of the village. **Action: The Clerk.**

4761 – Playing Field - Maintenance Report: The annual inspection of the Playing Field by RoSPA would have taken place in June or possibly would take place in July but no report had been received as yet.

Justin Witcombe had some concrete slabs left over from work in his garden and offered to place them under the picnic bench in the Playing Field to help preserve the picnic bench. This was agreed and Peter Glaisher and David Stevens volunteered to help him with the installation. **Action: Justin Witcombe with Peter Glaisher and David Stevens.**

The Working Party (Ian Sage, Jayne Cox, Justin Witcombe, Clare Kingston and the Clerk) had met on June 11th to consider fundraising proposals for the new play equipment. It was

noted that the play equipment would receive a share of the profits on the teas during the Open Garden at Batcombe House and that members of the Parish Council had offered to approach local firms for sponsorship. A suggestion had been made for a musical event in the evening after the Village Fete on the Sunday of the August Bank Holiday weekend, but it was felt that it was too late to organise this and an event immediately after the Fete was not felt to be ideal.

Instead it was proposed to have an event in the Playing Field next spring with music, teas, a bar and other attractions. The main issue was to find someone to organise the event and Justin offered to approach possible organisers. It was also suggested that a letter should be sent to residents and local businesses asking for donations/sponsorship. Another proposal was to ask if the play equipment could have a share in the proceeds of the Christmas Draw in The Three Horseshoes, run by the Cricket Club.

David Stevens reported a positive response from his approaches to Westcombe Dairy and the Wild Beer Company and would follow this up. **Action: David Stevens.** Justin Witcombe stated that Mendip Signs would be willing to offer a donation and to provide a sign listing the sponsors. Justin to follow this up. **Action: Justin Witcombe.** Justin Witcombe also reported that Anna James would be willing to organise the event in the Spring. It was suggested having a stall at the Village Fete, but was felt better to ask for a donation for the use of the Playing Field as many of the Parish Council would be involved in the Fete. **Action: The Clerk.** Justin Witcombe had approached the Cricket Club but they were struggling at the moment. It was agreed that the Clerk should draft a letter asking for donation and circulate it to Councillors. **Action: The Clerk.**

The Parish Council had agreed in March (Minute 4697) that the annual Village Fete could take place on the Sunday of the August Bank Holiday weekend instead of the Monday. It was agreed to close the Playing Field on the Saturday to allow the safe preparation of the Fete. The clear up after the Fete would take place on the Monday. The zip wire would be padlocked during this period to prevent accidents and an inspection of the Playing Field take place after the clear up. The inside of the Playing Field hedge would need to be cut back before the Fete and it was agreed to ask Gary Butler to do this as in previous years. **Action: The Clerk.**

Jo Addison was thanked for undertaking weaving of the willow structure in the Playing Field with the assistance of Bert and Daisy May Witcombe. The Clerk was asked to write letters of thanks to Jo and to Bert and Daisy. **Action: The Clerk.**

4762 – Planning Applications: There were no planning applications to consider.

Planning Application Updates: The application to convert and extend the outbuilding at The Three Horseshoes to provide staff accommodation had been approved with the condition that the occupation of the building is limited to “a person solely or mainly working as an employee at The Three Horseshoes, Back Lane, Batcombe to include spouse and any residential dependants”.

The Tree Preservation Order on the tree on land on Westcombe Stables Lane opposite Westcombe Stables had been confirmed and a non-material amendment had been granted for an alteration to the roof design of the proposed snug area at Giles Cottages. The application for single storey rear extension at Cherry Tree Cottage had been approved.

4763 – Tree Plaque at Batcombe House: The Head Gardener at Batcombe House had informed the Parish Council that the plaque on the roadside wall at Batcombe House was in a poor state of repair with a rotten frame and cracked Perspex. The plaque commemorates the planting of a Cedar tree in Batcombe House - the 100th tree planted in Batcombe to celebrate the Queen’s Silver Jubilee. The plaque was specially made by carpenters aboard the Royal Yacht Britannia as the captain, Rear Admiral Hugh Jannion, was living in Batcombe at the

time. David Stevens volunteered to talk to the owner of Batcombe House about getting the plaque repaired. **Action: David Stevens.**

4764 - Authorisation of payment: The Clerk reported that the problems with the new online method of amending NatWest bank mandates were continuing, and so it agreed to continue the suspension of Financial Regulation 6.4 to allow the Clerk to sign cheques, with the safeguards agreed at the last meeting.

Councillors authorised the following payments:

- £160.00 Dominic Conway – Grass cutting in May.
- £1,021.02 The Clerk – Salary for 1st Quarter.
- £98.65 The Clerk – Expenses for 1st Quarter.
- £75.00 SALC – Training for four Councillors.

The following grants were approved at the last meeting:

- £300.00 Batcombe Village Hall Trust – includes the hire of rooms for meetings.
- £200.00 Batcombe PCC – the Burial Grant for the maintenance of the churchyard.
- £100.00 Mendip Citizen's Advice Bureau.
- £100.00 Mendip Community Transport – grant provided under the section 137 power.

4765 – Other Business - Matters of Information Only: John Sommer had been storing two tins of paint for repainting the Westcombe telephone kiosk stored in his barn and had asked if the Parish Council wished to store it elsewhere. Peter Glaisher volunteered to store the paint. **Action: Peter Glaisher.**

The Clerk noted that the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service were conducting a consultation on the realignment of resources in the Service. It was agreed that there was no need to consider the consultation at the September meeting as most reductions in fire stations would be in Devon.

4766 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 7th August 2019 at 8.00pm in the Old School, Batcombe if required to consider planning applications. Otherwise Wednesday 4th September 2019.

M Comley
04.09.19