

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 5th February 2020 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 7.30pm.

Present - Councillors: Jayne Cox, Peter Glaisher, Janet Jones and Ian Sage.

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage, Michael Gay – District Councillor, and four members of the public.

4849 – Apologies for Absence: Mary Comley, David Stevens, Justin Witcombe and Nigel Hewitt-Cooper – County Councillor. In the absence of the Chairman, the Vice Chairman Janet Jones chaired the meeting.

4850 – Declarations of Interest: Ian Sage and Jayne Cox declared an interest in item 4864 (re-imbusement of the Clerk for internet security for the Parish Council's laptop) as relatives of the Clerk.

4851 – Public Participation: A local resident requested better signposts for the village footpaths and noted that there were a number of broken stiles. The Clerk asked for any issues with footpaths to be reported to him. The same resident had seen a programme about sewage sludge being dumped on farmland and asked what the Parish and District Councils were doing about this. The District Councillor offered to respond on behalf of the District Council. Ian Sage stated that he was unaware of any local farmers using sewage sludge and noted that there were strict regulations about what could be applied to farmland.

4852 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 8th January 2020 were agreed as a correct record after the correction of a couple of small typos and signed by the Vice Chairman.

4853 – Matters Arising: Precept – the Clerk reported that the request for a precept of £9,950 had been submitted to the District Council and acknowledged. Minute Book – the Clerk reported that a new Minute Book binder had been purchased as a cost of £72 plus VAT.

4854 – District and County Councillors' Reports: The District Councillor reported that people in Wanstrow had heard nothing from Truespeed about the proposed highspeed broadband. He noted that there might be a problem in that Nunney and Cranmore already had highspeed broadband and so Truespeed may not have a connection through to Wanstrow and Batcombe. He would report back when he had received an update.

Upton Noble School would like to have a supply of grit and the District Councillor was going to meet with the school head. Wanstrow had also expressed a concern about access to the school and he hoped to co-ordinate joint action by the parishes in the catchment area. He had also written to Charlie Higgins at Somerset Highways and to the County Councillor about the potholes at Snakelake.

He stated that there had been an excellent meeting in Mendip about how Stroud District Council had addressed the climate emergency. He would approach the head of the Somerset Waste Partnership about a speaker on recycling for the Annual Parish Meeting.

4855 – Sewage Treatment Plant at Ash Tree Cottages: The District Councillor reported that a contract for the replacement of the treatment plant would be let the following Friday.

Hastoes had been waiting for an answer from their solicitors as to whether any compensation was due to the landowner of the field where the outflow pipe ran. It was hoped the work would be completed by the end of the month. A neighbour expressed concerns about the impact the work would have on her property as it was possible the pipe ran close to her boundary. A former Parish Councillor expressed a concern that the problem had been ongoing for 15 months and felt that the Parish Council should have acted sooner on behalf of the residents of Ash Tree Cottages. The District Councillor hoped that his involvement would encourage a change of culture within Hastoes so that they would respond to the concerns of their tenants more promptly.

4856 – Westcombe Telephone Kiosk - Defibrillator: The Clerk reported that the Batcombe and Westcombe Defibrillator Group had asked permission to use the telephone kiosk in Westcombe as the location of the Westcombe defibrillator. The Council stated that it was open to the idea but needed clarity over what would be involved before giving permission. In particular would an electricity supply be needed and if so who would pay for it? And what alterations would be made to the kiosk and would the Defibrillator Group be applying for Listed Building Consent? The Clerk to reply to the Group. **Action: The Clerk.**

4857 – Allotments: The Clerk reported that the rent for nine of the ten allotments had now been paid and the remaining allotment holder had promised to pay by bank transfer. The tap on the water tank still needed repairing. **Action: The Chairman (Mary Comley).**

4858 – Footpaths and Highways: Concerns were raised about the potholes at Snakelake and a former Parish Councillor felt that just filling in the potholes was not sufficient. It was noted that Somerset Highways had been marking the potholes for repair that day.

Recent icy weather had revived concerns about access to and from Batcombe in such conditions and a resident had asked if the Parish Council could salt the roads with a second hand salt spreader. It was noted that there were insurance and training requirements for volunteers to work on the highways. A former Parish Councillor felt that the Parish Council should pay for the County Council's contractors to cover Batcombe. It was noted that this had been considered before and would be very expensive. The Clerk was asked to obtain an estimate of the cost of this. **Action: The Clerk.**

The District Councillor reported that the County Council was offering training in the maintenance and repair of fingerposts. If 25 volunteers came forward the training could be done in Mendip. The District Councillor had asked for this to be included at the Parish Forum. **Action: The District Councillor.**

It was reported that access to the footpath by the Old Chapel had been padlocked. The Clerk to check and if necessary write to the landowner. **Action: The Clerk.**

4859 – Playing Field - Maintenance Report: Ian Sage was thanked for adding a metal lock to the electricity cabinet. There was further evidence of moles in the Playing Field. Gary Butler had cut back the willow structure. The Clerk reported that Southern Electric had overcharged for the supply of electricity to the Playing Field but this had now been repaid. A request was received from the Fete Committee, via a member of the public present, for the electricity supply to be upgraded. The Clerk to investigate and the request to be considered at the next meeting. **Action: The Clerk.**

New Play Equipment: Thanks were recorded to our County Councillor for a grant of £1,250 from the County Council's Improving Lives Grant Scheme. The total money actually received for the new play equipment at the time of the meeting was £8,286.64. However, with the £1,250 from the County Councillor's grant and £500 from the company Peter Glaisher has been in contact with the total raised for the new play equipment was £10,036.64.

The Play Equipment Working Party (with all Parish Councillors being invited) had met the previous Monday to consider in detail the quotes provided by four play equipment suppliers for the new play equipment. The Working Party recommended that going back to three of the suppliers for revised quotes as the grant body required three comparable quotes. The fourth company had provided a quote for wooden equipment and this was felt to be unsuitable. The Working Party also recommended a separate basket ball hoop to go near the cricket net instead of combined goals and hoop. It also recommended larger and more inclusive multiplay equipment. These recommendations were agreed. Ian Sage and the Clerk to specify particular multiplay items from each company that would be comparable and more inclusive and then ask for revised quotes **Action: Ian Sage and The Clerk.**

4860 – Planning Applications: There were no planning applications to consider.

Planning Application Updates: The District Council had no objection to the felling of the Cherry tree at 6, Kale Street. The Clerk noted that an application for the approval of joinery details relating to a planning permission for Chandlers on Kale Street granted in 2010 had been withdrawn.

4861 – Annual Parish Meeting: The District Councillor had offered to find a speaker from the Somerset Waste Partnership. **Action: The District Councillor.**

4862 – Review of Standing Orders: The Council's Standing Orders were adopted in February 2014, based on a model produced by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). They were amended in 2016 to allow the electronic distribution of Agendas and papers to those Councillors who wished to receive them in this manner and Standing Order 3 1 which only allowed recording with the Council's prior written consent had been suspended as recording is now allowed under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014. No further amendments to Standing Orders were considered necessary.

4863 – Bank Reconciliation and Budget Update: Peter Glaisher reported to the meeting that he had checked the bank reconciliation prepared by the Clerk for the quarter to 31st December 2019.

An update on the budget had been enclosed with the Agendas, and this showed the accounts for the previous year, the budget for the current year, receipts and payments to date in the current year and a projection for this year based on the receipts and payment to date.

The Clerk reported that total receipts for the year were projected to be approximately £7,300 more than the budgeted figure because of the donations and fundraising for the new play equipment. The allotments rents were also likely to be £220 more than budgeted because some had been vacant at the start of the year and had been rented for part of the year in addition to the annual rent paid in November.

The projection for the Playing Field expenditure was likely to be £5,000 less than budgeted, largely because the budget had included spending on the new play equipment the £572 raised at the time of the budget and £4,000 from Parish Council funds put aside for this and it was now unlikely that any expenditure on the new play equipment would be made this year. Maintenance was also likely to be £550 less than budgeted as the only expenses would be the hedge trimming and willow cutting.

The projection for the expenditure on Administration was likely to be £1,000 less than the budgeted figure because the Parish Council election was uncontested and so only cost £97.50 instead of the budgeted £1,200. Photocopying was £50 more than budgeted as the invoice was for 18 months instead of a year.

The projection for the expenditure on Other items was £40 less than budgeted because the Community Council no longer asked for a subscription. Other items were likely to be £50 more than budgeted because of additional expenditure on the allotments.

Overall there is a projected surplus of £9,175 instead of the budgeted deficit of £4,200 – due to the fact that nothing had been spent on the new play equipment and a further £7,000 raised. Combined with the healthier position at the start of the year this meant that the projected funds at the end of the year were around £20,300 – £15,600 better than expected when the budget was made. The Clerk noted that around £1,000 of the figure would be earmarked for the allotments and £13,600 for the new play equipment.

4864 - Authorisation of payments: Councillors authorised the following payments:

£75.00 Gary Butler – Cutting back willow arches in Playing Field and disposing of cuttings.

£86.40 Amazon Payments UK Limited – New Minute Binder (£72 + VAT).

£109.00 The Society of Local Council Clerks – Clerk’s Subscription.

£34.99 The Clerk – Reimbursement of Laptop Internet Protection.

4865 – Other Business - Matters of Information Only: It was reported that the zip wire saddle was close to the ground when used by an adult. The Clerk to check and immobilise if necessary. **Action: The Clerk.** It was also noted the tree in the corner of the Playing Field was rotten. Peter Glaisher volunteered to ask a local tree surgeon for an opinion. **Action: Peter Glaisher.**

4866 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 4th March 2020 at 7.30pm in the Old School, Batcombe.

M Comley

4/3/20