

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 4th September 2019 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 8.00pm.

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

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

4773 – Apologies for Absence: Apologies had been received from Ian Sage and Justin Witcombe, who were working; and from Nigel Hewitt-Cooper, the County Councillor.

4774 – Declarations of Interest: Jayne Cox declared an interest in item 4783 the diversion of the public right of way at Greenscombe Farm as a member of the Mendip Bridleways and Byways Association (MBBA) and as her partner was a tenant of the landowner. Mary Comley declared an interest in the same item as a committee member of the MBBA.

4775 – Public Participation: The former District Councillor asked what the Parish Council was doing about the provision of affordable housing given that the need was still there. He also noted that the land on which it had been proposed to build low cost housing was up for auction and that the developer would still be interested. It was agreed to consider affordable housing at a future meeting. **Action: The Clerk.**

4776 – Minutes of the Meetings held on Wednesdays 3rd July and 7th August 2019. Justin Witcombe had noted a couple of corrections to Minute 4761 before the meeting: (i) “Mendip Signs would be willing to offer a donation *or and* to provide a sign listing the sponsors.” (ii) “the Cricket Club ... were struggling at the moment, *but may be able to help at a later date.*” These amendments having been made, the corrected Minutes were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4777 – Matters Arising: Annual Grants – Thanks had been received for the grants to the Village Hall Trust and to Mendip Community Transport.

Tree Plaque at Batcombe House – David Stevens noted that the owner of Batcombe House was concerned that the tree had been planted too close to the garden wall and might need to come down in the near future, which would make the repair of the plaque inappropriate. It was suggested that the plaque be donated to the Heritage Room. **Action: David Stevens** to speak to the owner of Batcombe House about the donation of the plaque.

Sewage Treatment Plant at Ash Tree Cottages – Nothing had been done to repair the plant and the residents had had to cope with a bad smell during the warm weather in the summer. The Chairman had spoken to Hastoes, but nothing had happened apart from another visit by a consultant. The District Councillor was willing to intercede with Hastoes. David Stevens recommended contacting the Chief Executive of the Housing Association. The Chairman and District Councillor to confer. **Action: The Chairman.**

4778 – District and County Councillors’ Reports: The County Councillor had provided a written report that had been e-mailed to Councillors.

The District Councillor reported on the appearance of Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS) before the Scrutiny Committee of the District Council. He noted that Gigaclear the broadband provider used by CDS had not made any implementations in Mendip. Matt Barrow from CDS was willing to speak to Parish Councils but this was not felt to be worth doing as CDS were unlikely to provide a solution for Batcombe. The District Councillor noted that there was a national organisation, BDUK, that would provide a voucher for anyone with less than 3MB broadband or who lived in an area with less than 30MB. Janet Jones noted that Truespeed was still progressing. **Action: Janet Jones** to look into vouchers.

4779 – Allotments: The tap on the water tank in the allotments was leaking and needed repairing. **Action: The Chairman** offered to get her husband to sort this out.

As all the allotments were taken there was no need to give notice to the allotment holders and a new lease would need to be signed with the owners of the field in due course. **Action: The Clerk.**

4780 – Footpaths and Highways: Somerset Highways had informed the Parish Council that road at the railway bridge in Wanstrow would be closed on the evening of September 7th to allow Network Rail to fit missing bridge chevrons to both elevations of the bridge.

The Parish Council had received a response from David Peake, the Highway Service Manager, to the request for the options the Parish Council would have with regard to salting the roads. He stated that Batcombe had not been included in the precautionary salting network for the coming winter. He added that the highway arrangements for the coming winter included a Community Snow Warden Scheme aimed to encourage self-help within communities in winter weather with some support from the County Council. The details of this scheme were being developed and the County Council would be contacting parish councils with more information shortly. He suggested that the Parish Council discuss the situation in Batcombe with him once this information had been sent out. To be considered at the next meeting. **Action: The Clerk.**

Peter Glaisher raised a concern about speeding in the parish and whether the Parish Council could purchase signs that warned drivers of their speed. **Action: The Clerk** to research details.

4781 – Playing Field - Maintenance Report: The Playing Field was left in a good condition after the Fete, but inspection of the multi-play revealed that the support for part of the bridge had cracked and was no longer safe. The Clerk had placed warning signs on the equipment stating that it should not be used until repairs had been made. However, someone had then jumped on the damaged section until it had given way. The Clerk had placed warning tape around the multi-play and Councillors agreed to meet in the Playing Field the following Saturday morning to decide what to do about the multi-play. The Clerk also reported that the remaining lock on the electricity cabinet had been broken and it was agreed to look at this the following Saturday as well. **Action: The Clerk and Councillors.**

The Fete Committee had raised a number of issues they wished the Parish Council to address. Janet Jones declared an interest as one of the helpers at the Fete. The Fete Committee asked for the tap in the bus shelter to be replaced for the Fete; reported a problem with the electricity tripping; and noted that the anchor point for the padlock on the picnic table was a trip hazard when the table was moved. To be looked at on the Saturday morning.

Gary Butler who had cut the inside of the Playing Field hedge noted that the hedge was encroaching into the Playing Field and Justin Witcombe had reported a suggestion that the

hedge should be laid. Councillors suggested that it would be less expensive to cut the hedge right back and let it grow back.

Annual Safety Inspection: The annual inspection of the Playing Field by RoSPA had taken place in July and a link to the inspection report had been circulated to Councillors. Most items in the Playing Field were rated low or very low risk and no item was high risk. The zip wire, overhead rings and goal posts were considered medium risk because of the nature of the items. The main concern was the multi-play whose risk score had increased from 8 to 12 because of the rot in the supports, although this was still considered medium risk.

New Play Equipment: Thanks were given to the Councillors who had distributed the letter asking for donations and sponsorship for the new play equipment and Peter Glaisher volunteered to distribute letters in Westcombe. **Action: Peter Glaisher.** The Clerk reported that £500 in sponsorship had been received from Westcombe Dairy, a further £470 had been received in cheques and cash and £720 received in bank transfers with further donations promised. This meant that the money raised was close to £4,000 out of the £6,000 needed. It was hoped that the fundraising could be completed by Christmas. The Clerk to put a renewed plea in the parish magazine with photos and a thank you to those who had donated. It was also agreed that an application for the Tesco Bags of Change scheme should be made. **Action: The Clerk.**

4782 – Planning Applications: Planning Application No: 2019/2093/TCA – T1 - walnut - reduce crown by 30% - severe damage at base – Millards Hill House, Kale Street, Batcombe. There were no objections to the proposal to reduce the crown of the damaged tree and the Council agreed to recommend approval.

Planning Application Updates: The application to convert the garage at Little Court to a ceramics studio for own use and to replace the garage roller door with glazed doors had been approved; as had the application to remove the existing derelict building at the Lower Farm orchard and replace it with a new agricultural store.

An application for a lawful development certificate for the siting of a log cabin (mobile home) in the garden of 5 Kale Street to provide ancillary accommodation had been approved. As permitted development the Parish Council was not consulted on this application.

4783 – Application for the Diversion of Public Right of Way at Greenscombe Farm, Milton Clevedon: Jayne Cox had asked that the Parish Council consider this application for the diversion of Public Right of Way SM15/16 at Greenscombe Farm. The farm is not within the parish and so the Parish Council has not been consulted, but this is a bridleway used by several horse riders from Batcombe. There had been several objections on the grounds that the alternative proposed route was unsuitable and the application was linked to Planning Permission 2019/0962/FUL and Listed Building Consent 2019/0963/LBC for the “Erection of a link between the farmhouse and a barn with alterations to these buildings. Conversion and adaptation of existing outbuildings for ancillary residential use, provision of an open swimming pool with an associated building and a new building for equestrian and agricultural use” at Greenscombe Farm, as the new building would be built on the existing bridleway. The determination date for these applications has passed but no decision had yet been made. The Chairman noted that the Rights of Way Officer had met with the MBBA and a new route for the bridleway had been proposed that was much less of a diversion and closer to the existing permissive way.

4784 – Himalayan Balsam along the River Alham: A resident of Stoney Stratton (who happened to be a former environmental officer with Bristol City Council) had reported that the stretch of river between Spargrove and Westcombe is heavily infested with the invasive weed

Himalayan Balsam. She had reported this to Mendip District Council but had been informed that it was the landowners' responsibility to clear this invasive weed and the District Council and the Environment Agency would only get involved if it was encroaching on a neighbour's land and the neighbour complained. The resident asked if the Parish Council would be willing to inform the landowners along the river of the need to clear the weed. There was some discussion of who owned land along the river and the Clerk was asked to write to landowners.

Action: The Clerk.

4785 - Authorisation of payments: The Clerk reported that the new bank mandate was in place and so David Stevens and Janet Jones could now sign cheques.

Councillors authorised the following payment:

£160.00 Dominic Conway – Grass cutting in August.

The Clerk noted following bill had been paid by Direct Debit:

£51.82 Southern Electric – electricity supply for the Playing Field (April to July).

The Clerk stated that he had queried this bill as Southern Electric had overcharged the Parish Council and had been promised a refund. **Action: The Clerk** to check on this.

4786 – Other Business - Matters of Information Only: The Clerk reported that the next meeting of the Mendip Parish Forum would take place on September 12th in the Mendip District Council Offices and would include a training session on planning. He also reported that the next meeting of the Frome Rural PACT would take place in Batcombe Village Hall on Tuesday October 29th.

Defibrillators – a former Parish Councillor had noted the fact that the electricity supply to the telephone kiosk in Westcombe had been removed and suggested that the Parish Council informed the defibrillator fundraisers that this is the case as they might be hoping to use the kiosk as the location for the Westcombe defibrillator. David Stevens noted that the defibrillator that it was hoped to install worked off a battery.

The Clerk reported that the VAT claim of £76.48 made on May 6th was paid on June 26th and noted that HMRC were usually quicker than this in repaying the VAT.

4787 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 2nd October 2019 at 8.00pm in the Old School, Batcombe.

M Comley
2/10/19