

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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You are Summoned to the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council to be held on Wednesday 6th November 2019 at 7.30pm 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 the Meeting held on Wednesday 2nd October 2019 to be agreed and signed. *Enclosed.*

5. Matters Arising – information updates only.

Sewage Treatment Plant at Ash Tree Cottages – The Chairman and/or the District Councillor to update on progress.

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

The allotment rents were due on November 1st and all allotment holders have been sent a reminder. Two have already paid.

The hedge will need to be cut back again – does the Parish Council wish to ask Gary Butler to do this as in previous years?

The Chairman to update on progress with repairing the tap on the water tank.

8. Footpaths and Highways

Details of Somerset Highways' pre-salting network have been published. Most of the cuts last year have been reversed, including the road from Bruton to Evercreech. However, as we had already been informed the road from Evercreech through Batcombe will not be salted.

Details of the proposed Community Snow Warden Scheme can be found on the enclosed Information Sheet.

9. Playground.

Maintenance Report: *The electricity cabinet box needs repairing. We are waiting to hear from a local electrician who offered to replace the locks on the cabinet.*

The overpayment on the electricity for the Playing Field has been corrected and we now have credit with Southern Electric.

New Play Equipment: *We will be able to report back on the Bonfire Party, which hopefully will have been a great success. We have received some additional donations for the new play equipment since the last meeting including one for £1,000. Total raised is now over £6,000. I will check with the bank for details of additional transfers and provide a total at the meeting.*

We need to make some decisions on what equipment we want so that we can get three quotes for the same items and then apply for the grant. One decision to be made is whether we replace the zip wire at this stage.

10. Planning Applications:

The District Council have amended the consultation response form. The Parish Council is still asked to recommend either approval, refusal or that the decision is left to the case officer – but if recommending refusal the Parish Council is asked to place its concerns within a list of material considerations. A copy of the new form is enclosed to assist Councillors with their consideration of applications. Please keep it for future reference.

Planning Application No: 2019/2485/LBC – Extension to existing residential dwelling, associated demolition works and associated internal alterations. Donegal Cottage, Kale Street, Batcombe.

The application is for some minor changes to an already approved application (including a slightly changed window arrangement). A non-material amendment for the planning application (Ref: 2017/2606/HSE) has already been approved but Listed Building Consents cannot be amended this way and so a new application is required. The Parish Council recommended approval of the original Listed Building Consent in November 2017.

Planning Application No: 2019/2570/TCA – Proposed works to tree/s in a Conservation Area: Eucalyptus (T1) Pollard to 3m. Stockley Cottage, Back Lane, Batcombe.

The Eucalyptus is to the rear of Stockley Cottage. No reason is given for the pollarding, but Eucalypti keep growing if not pollarded.

Planning Application No: 2019/2585/TCA – Works to trees in a Conservation Area: T1 Holm Oak, fell and replace. T2 – Monterey Cypress, fell and replace. The Old Barn, Batcombe.

No details yet apart from the description above.

Planning Application Updates.

The Chairman has been informed that an application will be made to redevelop Valley View Farm at some point. There are no details yet of the application.

The District Council had no objection to the tree works at Coombe Cottage – reducing a Magnolia to a six-foot pole and reducing an apple tree by 2 metres all over.

The application for approval of details on Listed Building Consent 2019/0679/LBC at Church View House, Church Farm has been refused as the applicant failed to provide sufficient details for the new windows and doors. (This was permission for the conversion of an outbuilding for ancillary use.)

11. Bank Reconciliation and Budget Update

Although we had a bank reconciliation last month that was for the first quarter up to June 30th (delayed over the summer) while we can now report the bank reconciliation for the second quarter to September 30th.

We also have a new update on the budget for this year, which will assist with the preparation of the budget for next year (next item). The enclosed sheet with four columns of figures shows the accounts

for last year, the budget for this year, receipts and payments to 5th October this year and a projection for this year based on expenditure to date.

There is very little change from the update provided at last month's meeting – see the Minutes of last month's meeting for details. The only significant change is that we have had an additional £1,900 in donations for the play equipment.

As with last month's projection I have assumed that all the money raised for play equipment will be spent this year, i.e. before 31st March 2020. This may not be the case, but the advantage of this assumption is that it removes the play equipment money from the projected funds at the end of the year.

12. Budget and Precept 2020/21

Enclosed is a budget for the year ending 31st March 2021. These accounts have two columns allowing the budget for 2020/21 to be compared to the projected figures for this year. Also enclosed is a forecast for the years 2020-2023. The next Parish Council election will take place in 2023/2024 and so does not appear in the forecast but we need to budget to have sufficient reserves to pay for a contested election at that time as well as any other contingencies such as a by-election. The last contested election we had twelve years ago cost £933 so we can assume a contested election will cost well over £1,000 and a by-election would potentially be double this as the costs would not be shared with a District Council election.

The budget and the forecast are produced on the basis of taking the projected figures for this year (apart from one-off expenditures) and adding small increases. These figures are not set in stone, and should be seen as the basis for discussion rather than final figures. It is for the Council to agree them or change them if they feel they are inadequate and additional expenditure needs to be made.

Looking at the budget for 2020/21 the VAT refund will be around £80 as no major works have been undertaken this year. (If the play equipment is purchased this year there would be a very large VAT refund but that would be part of the funding for the play equipment.) The allotment rent will be £350 if all the allotments are rented out.

The cost of the grass cutting is likely to be similar that projected for this year depending on the number of cuts required and any increase in the price per cut. I've set the figure for equipment maintenance at £500 as we no longer have to purchase play bark. The budget doesn't include money or grants raised for the play equipment. If these have not been spent in the previous year, they will be spent on the play equipment and so don't affect the precept unless we decide to make a larger contribution than the £4,000 already put aside.

I've budgeted for a 2% increase in the Clerk's salary. Other expenditure on administration is likely to be similar that projected for this year, except that there won't be an election. The budget is an opportunity for the Council to review the level of its grants. I've included £200 for winter road maintenance which is enough for a bag of salt for Hincombe Hill.

The budget has been prepared on the assumption that the play equipment will have been purchased this year. On this basis the budget predicts a surplus of £1,255 if the precept is unchanged at £9,750. This would leave £7,775 in our funds at the end of 2020/21. Given that around £1,000 of this will be earmarked for the allotments, this leaves us with reserves around the higher limit suggested by SALC (that a parish council's reserves should be between $\frac{1}{3}$ and $\frac{2}{3}$ of its precept) and should be sufficient to cover the cost of a by-election. It also allows some flexibility to spend more of the Parish Council's own money on the Playing Field if required – for example on laying the hedge.

Looking at the forecast for the years 2019-20223 I have allowed £500 year for unexpected/additional expenditure in 2021/22 and 2022/23. With no increases in the precept in these years, we would still have surpluses sufficient to build up reserves for the next election year.

A decision on the level of the precept does not have to be made at this meeting - and can be deferred until the December or January meetings. Councillors may wish to wait until the tax base for 2020/21

has been determined in January so that we will know the impact any increase will have on Council Tax. (If the tax base goes up each household in the parish pays less for the same precept, whereas if the tax base goes down each household pays more.) Last year the tax base went up, giving us greater freedom to increase the precept. If the tax base goes down again, the Parish Council might wish to consider reducing the precept so that the Parish Council element of Council tax does not increase.

13. Authorisation of Payment

- £???.00 Dominic Conway – Grass cutting in October. (*Invoice not yet received.*)
- £21.00 Mary Comley – TEN fee for Bonfire Party.
- £150.00 The Parish News – Photocopying.

14. Other Business – matters of information only. *Nothing at present.*

15. Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 4th December 2019 at 7.30pm in the Old School, Batcombe.

Rob Sage

Rob Sage – Clerk

31st October 2019