

# BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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## **You are Summoned to the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council to be held on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> November 2017 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. Filling of the Parish Council Vacancy by Co-option and Acceptance of Office**

*As no by-election was claimed, the vacancy on the Parish Council resulting from the resignation of Iona FitzGerald can be filled by co-option. The vacancy has been advertised on the website, in the parish magazine and on the notice boards. Two people have expressed an interest in serving on the Parish Council.*

*The co-option has to be agreed by a vote of the current Council. The correct procedure is for the Chairman to call for nominations and for current Councillors to nominate persons who are willing to be co-opted. (It may be that not all persons expressing an interest are nominated - equally not expressing a written interest does not prevent someone being nominated if they are willing to serve.) If only one person is nominated the Council still has to vote on the co-option.*

*If there is more than one person nominated, our Standing Orders allow for a paper ballot of Councillors. If more than two people are nominated and no one obtains more than 50% of the votes, the person with the least number of votes is dropped from the list and a new vote is taken. This process is repeated until someone receives more than 50% of the votes. The Chairman then declares them to be co-opted. If the newly co-opted Councillor signs their Declaration of Acceptance of Office they take their place on the Council immediately. If the person co-opted is not present the Council should pass a resolution allowing them to sign their Declaration of Acceptance before the next meeting. If the person co-opted does not sign their Declaration of Acceptance their co-option is invalid.*

*To avoid embarrassment the Chairman will give any candidates present the option of leaving the room while the vote takes place. It should, however, be noted that the vote has to take place in public and that the candidates are entitled to be present if they wish.*

#### **3. 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. The newly co-opted Councillor has 28 days to complete the Register of Interests form, information from which is published on the District Council and Parish Council websites.*

- 4. 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.*
- 5. Minutes of Meeting held on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2017** to be agreed and signed. *Enclosed.*
- 6. Matters Arising** – information updates only.  
*Nothing at present.*
- 7. 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.*
- 8. Footpaths and Highways**  
*As noted at last month's meeting, Somerset Highways have stated that they will attempt to grit for five runs from Evercreech as far as the Old Rectory on Gold Hill, but will terminate this route if cars are parked inappropriately. Justin Witcombe reports that a trial run was recently undertaken on this route.*  
  
*The Parish Council have asked our County Councillor to press for gritting to be undertaken on the whole of the route from Evercreech to the A359 junction at Upton Noble to allow a safe route for the school bus. Justin Witcombe has asked the primary school to request that the road from the A359 to the school is gritted. The Chairman is organising a meeting of the residents of the end of Kale Street where problems have occurred to ensure that cars are parked appropriately with room for the gritting lorry (and emergency vehicles) to pass.*  
  
*White lines have been reinstated at the junctions around the Round House, following the reporting of a complaint at the last Parish Council meeting.*
- 9. Shindig Weekender May 2018 at Gilcombe Farm**  
*Dan Hurring, the local organiser of the Shindig festival, has informed us that they will be putting in a Premises Licence application at the end of November. The Directors of Shindig are aware of the problems this year, are proposing to make changes to the festival to reduce the disturbance, and would like to talk to the Parish Council. It should be noted that the size of the festival will be increasing to over 5,000 people.*
- 10. Allotments**  
*Allotments rent will be due on November 1<sup>st</sup>. There will then be three vacant allotments as two allotment holders have indicated that they will be giving up. Advertising in the parish magazine and on the Parish Council website has not produced any response, so it likely these allotments may remain vacant for the time being. The current lease of the allotments field comes to an end in April 2019. If further allotments become vacant the Council may need to consider whether it renews the lease.*  
  
*The gatepost at the entrance to the allotments field is reported to be rotten and in need of replacing. As the Parish Council installed this gate when taking on the allotments it our responsibility to replace it rather than the landowners. The allotments rent is earmarked for use on the allotments and there are sufficient funds for this work and to restore the allotment field to its original condition at the end of the lease. (Currently £758.38 but with £245 in rent due on November 1<sup>st</sup>.)*
- 11. Affordable Housing**  
*Consideration of whether the Parish Council should be more proactive in seeking land for affordable housing was deferred from the last meeting.*

## **12. Batcombe War Memorial**

*In February the Parish Council, as custodian of the Batcombe War Memorial, agreed in principle to the addition of the name of William Newman. Mr Newman, who lived in Westcombe as a child, was a member of the Somerset Light Infantry killed at the Battle of Le Cateau in August 1914. In May the Parish Council confirmed that it was happy for quotes to be obtained for the addition of the name and repairs to the War Memorial on the basis that it would have the final say on the work to be done.*

*The work has now been done, the name added and some minor repairs undertaken. The work has been done well, in keeping with the existing inscriptions, and in time for the Remembrance Sunday Act of Remembrance.*

## **13. Playground - Maintenance Report.**

*A report from the Chairman and Ian Sage on the condition of the play equipment is attached and includes proposals for dealing with the condition of the multi-play apparatus in the Playing Field.*

*To discuss the replacing of the wood in the seat around the tree stump that is rotten. Ian Sage has offered to undertake the work and to supply the wood needed at a cost of £250. Advice has been requested from the Somerset Association of Local Councils as to whether the Council can pay Ian for the wood. Parish Councils cannot pay Councillors to undertake work for them.*

*To discuss the application of wood preservative to the play apparatus in the Playing Field. Iona FitzGerald has offered to help.*

*The mole continues to be very active in the Playing Field. When last discussed in May it was agreed not to discuss the mole again until this meeting.*

## **14. Planning Applications:**

*Note: the plans for the following applications will be on display for half an hour before the Council meeting. They can also be viewed online by following the link to the District Council's Planning Application Search that can be found on the Planning Applications page on the Parish Council website and entering the reference number.*

### **Planning Application No: 2017/2569/HSE**

Construction of a new detached single storey garage and construction of a new stairwell following demolition of part of existing lean-to.

Chatley Barn, Linch Lane, Batcombe – Householder Application.

*Chatley Barn is at the top of Linch Lane and consists of a barn conversion with an extension creating an L shaped building with a later lean-to added behind the original barn. The staircase in the barn conversion has limited headway. The proposal is to construct a stairwell in the corner of the L replacing part of the lean-to. The stairwell would have a flat roof and be glazed to allow additional light into the building.*

### **Planning Application No: 2017/2606/HSE**

Extension to existing residential dwelling, associated demolition works and associated internal alterations.

Donegal Cottage, Kale Street, Batcombe – Householder Application.

### **Planning Application No: 2017/2607/LBC**

Extension to existing residential dwelling, associated demolition works and associated internal alterations.

Donegal Cottage, Kale Street, Batcombe – Listed Building Consent.

*Donegal Cottage is a Grade II Listed Building in the terrace on the north side of Kale Street. In December 2016 the Parish Council recommended approval of an application for an extension to the rear of the cottage, but this application was withdrawn after concerns were raised by the Conservation Officer. This is a revised application intended to address the concerns of the*

conservation officer. It seeks to improve the layout and headroom within the cottage by the addition of a gable end and dormer window to the rear elevation and by replacing a storage unit at the rear with a single storey extension. It is noted that most of the cottages in the terrace have already been extended in similar ways and that the front elevation will be unchanged.

**Planning Application No: 2017/2764/TCA**

Proposed works to trees in a conservation area including the felling of Norway Maple (NM), Goat Willow (GW) and Ash (A), clearance of Cherry Laurel (CL), reduce three Monterey Cypress (MC) to 4m, thinning of two groups of Beech (BG1 & BG2) and possible felling of a pear tree (P) if it can't be saved.

The Old Barn, Batcombe – Works/Felling Trees in a CA

Notification just received but details should be available by the date of the meeting.

**Planning Updates.**

Nothing to report.

**15. Bank Reconciliation and Budget Update 2017/18**

*Our Financial Regulations require that every quarter a bank reconciliation is produced by the Clerk, checked by a member of the Council, and reported to the Council as soon as possible after the end of the quarter. The bank reconciliation for the second quarter to 30<sup>th</sup> September to be verified before the meeting and reported to the Council.*

*Financial Regulations also require the Clerk to provide an update on the budget each quarter. An update on the budget as at the end of October for the current year is enclosed. The first column shows the actual accounts for last year. The second column is budget for this year as agreed in January. The third column is the receipts and payments to the end of September and the fourth column a projection of the position at the end of the year.*

*Receipts are projected to be approximately £100 less than the budgeted figure because there will be three vacant allotments in November.*

*The projection for the Playing Field expenditure is £120 less than budgeted because additional cuts of the Playing Field were budgeted for and these have not been undertaken. This saving is balanced by additional maintenance costs (repairing the seat around the tree stump) and the extra cost of attending the annual inspection.*

*The projection for the expenditure on Administration is £260 more than the budgeted figure because of the additional hours worked by the Clerk in 2016/17 were paid for this year. In addition, two years of the Clerk's membership of the SLCC were paid in the current year and the cost of internet protection for the Parish Council laptop had not been budgeted.*

*The projection for the expenditure on Other items is £600 more than budgeted because of the money received as the Health and Well-being grant in 2015/16 that was spent on a new notice board and money spent repairing the gate to the allotments field.*

*Although the projected surplus is £450 compared to a budgeted surplus of £1,276, the healthier position at the start of the year means that the projected funds at the end of the year are around £6,400 – £630 better than expected when the budget was made.*

*It should be noted that approximately £750 of the figure will be earmarked for the allotments.*

**16. Budget and Precept 2018/19**

*Enclosed is a budget for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019. These accounts have two columns allowing the budget for 2018/19 to be compared to the projected figures for this year. Also enclosed is a forecast for the years 2017-2021. The next Parish Council election will take place in 2019/2020 and we need to budget to have sufficient reserves to pay for a contested election as well as any other*

contingencies such as a by-election. The figure of £1,200 for the cost of the election is an estimate based on the fact that the last contested election ten years ago cost £933.

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. In particular the Chairman would like to consider the level of grants given by the Parish Council and budgeting for repairs to the multi-play equipment in the Playing Field (as mentioned above).

Looking at the budget for 2018/19, the VAT refund will be around £200 depending whether VAT can be reclaimed on the wood for the seat repair. The allotment rent may be less than £350 if one or more allotments remain vacant, but this will only affect the budget if the rent received is less than the costs of maintaining the allotments.

Most items of expenditure have been assumed to be similar to this year with small increases where likely. I've set the figure for equipment maintenance at £750. This will cover the play bark and smaller repairs, etc. If the Council decides to undertake major repairs/replacement of equipment this is better budgeted for separately. It should be noted that the Playing Field maintenance is the most difficult item to budget for, as you don't know what something will cost until it breaks. The £750 is therefore a nominal sum to cover minor repairs based on past experience, and anything major either has to be paid for from reserves (which is why we have them) or has to wait until money can be raised. It is for the Council to decide if the £750 is adequate.

There was a request last year from a member of the public to consider more frequent cuts of the Playing Field grass. Our regular contractor is unable to do this and it has not proved possible to find another contractor to undertake the additional cuts. I've therefore budgeted for a fortnightly cut.

I've budgeted for a 2% increase in the Clerk's salary. Recent increases have been 1% but there is the possibility of a higher increase next year.

The Chairman would like the Council to review the level of its grants. Currently we give £200 to the PCC to help with the upkeep of the churchyard; £200 to the Village Hall Trust (of which £150 pays for village organisations to use the Old School for committee meetings free of charge); and £100 to two other charities – currently Mendip Community Transport and Mendip Citizens' Advice Bureau. The grant to the PCC was last increased in 2006; the grant to the Village Hall Trust was reduced to the current level in 2007 (a larger grant had been given before this to help pay for the Jubilee Hall).

With no increase in either the grants or the precept or additional Playing Field maintenance, the budget predicts a surplus of £1,145 on the year. Looking at the forecast for the years 2017-2021, I have allowed £500 year for unexpected/additional expenditure and a cost of £1,200 for the election. With no increase in the precept this gives a deficit of £800 in 2019/20 (assuming a contested election) and a surplus of £250 in 2020/21. It should be noted that the deficit in 2019/20 is solely because of the election costs and is covered by the surpluses in the years before and after.

This leaves the Council with reserves of around £7,000 at the end of 2020/21 which is near the upper limit recommended 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 and other additional expenditure in the same year.

There is some scope for small increases (say in the level of grants) without increasing the precept. However, should major repairs be undertaken in the Playing Field, a planned increase should be considered.

A decision on the level of the precept does not have to be made at this meeting - and can be deferred until the December meeting. Councillors may wish to wait until the tax base for 2018/19 has been

*determined so that we will know the impact any or no 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.)*

**17. Authorisation of Payment**

£???.00 Gardens of Avalon – Grass cutting in October. *(Invoice not yet received.)*  
£120.00 Grant Thornton UK LLP – Audit Fee.

**18. Other Business** – matters of information only.

*The Frome Rural South Beat, which includes Batcombe, now has a new PCSO, Olga Hapova. Olga has provided a crime report for September, which has been distributed to Councillors.*

**19. Date and Time of Next Meeting:**

Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> December at 7.30pm in the Old School, Batcombe.

*Rob Sage*

Rob Sage – Clerk

25<sup>th</sup> October 2017