

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

Tel: 01749 850934

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

You are Summoned to the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council to be held on Wednesday 8th January 2020 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 4th December 2019 to be agreed and signed. *Enclosed.*

5. Matters Arising – information updates only.

The Clerk has been in contact with the members of the Staffing Committee to arrange a meeting for the Clerk's annual appraisal – probably in February. New Minute Book – the cheapest price for the binder we use for the Minutes (a Twinlock Crown Binder size 3C) is on Amazon currently at £72.79. Is the Parish Council willing to authorise this purchase?

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. Sewage Treatment Plant at Ash Tree Cottages

The Chairman and/or the District Councillor to update on progress.

8. Allotments

The allotment rents were due on November 1st and eight of the rents have now been paid. The two remaining allotment holders have been in contact and promised to pay by bank transfer. The tap on the water tank awaits repair.

9. Footpaths and Highways

The Chairman has been in contact with Upton Noble School about safe access to the school in icy weather and has reminded our County Councillor of our concerns about the lack of salting in icy

weather. The 1-ton dumpy bags of salt have been delivered to Portway Farm. Fortunately, the winter has so far been a mild one.

10. Playground.

Maintenance Report: *Work has begun on the electricity cabinet box but is not yet complete. The moles disappeared for a while but have now returned. Gary Butler has been asked to cut back the willow structure.*

New Play Equipment: *Thanks for Clare Kingston for organising the Bingo Evening in December. While there were fewer people supporting the evening this year, it still raised £502 after expenses (food and advertising). Donations and fundraising for the new play equipment now total £8,130, including £20 from the Mendip Lottery in December. This doesn't include monies that have been promised but not yet received – including the grant from the County Councillor's budget that was held up by the period of election purdah.*

Six play equipment suppliers were asked to provide quotes for the new play equipment in time for this meeting, although some may have difficulties due to the Christmas holidays. To date revised quotes have been received from Sovereign, Wickstead and Sutcliffe Play. Redlynch Leisure and Kompan have visited the Playing Field and will be providing quotes. It was agreed at the last meeting that the Working Party (including all Parish Councillors) should meet separately to consider the quotes and so we need to arrange a date.

11. Planning Applications:

Planning Application No: 2019/3048/TCA

Works to Trees in a Conservation Area: T1 - Cherry tree, fell.

6 Kale Street, Batcombe.

The application is to fell the Cherry tree in front of 6 Kale Street “to clear BT phone wires and create more light at front of house”.

Planning Application Updates.

The District Council had no objection to the felling of the Holm Oak and the Monterey Cypress at The Old Barn. The Tree Officer visited the site, inspected both trees and concluded that neither was worthy of a Tree Preservation Order. Specifically of the Holm Oak, he stated that the tree was “not in a very good physiological condition or of an aesthetically pleasing appearance”.

12. Annual Parish Meeting

We need to agree a speaker and topic for the Annual Parish Meeting. The Chairman has suggested recycling as a topic and is trying to find a suitable speaker.

13. Website Accessibility Audit

The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 came into force on the 23rd September 2018. These require the websites of public sector bodies (including parish councils) to comply with the international WCAG 2.1 AA accessibility standard by September 23rd 2020. A public sector body does not have to comply with sections of the accessibility standard if these would place a disproportionate burden on the body. However, the Parish Council does have to produce an accessibility statement (based on a model provided) explaining how accessible the website is and why the requirements that have not been complied with would be a disproportionate burden.

In order to produce the accessibility statement, the Parish Council has to check the website for accessibility problems. This can be done by an accessibility expert within the organisation (which the Parish Council doesn't have) or by asking a third party to undertake an accessibility audit of the website. This will typically cost £1,300 a day and is likely to take several days. If the Council considers these options to be a disproportionate burden (given the audit could cost the equivalent of an entire year's precept), the Council can opt to undertake a basic check for accessibility that can be done by the webmaster (i.e the Clerk).

It should be noted that the basic check will still take several days as there are a list of tests that have to be done on a sample number of the website's pages. One of the tests is the use of proper headings so that screen readers can jump to headings. This requirement also applies to .pdfs published on the website since 23rd September 2018. It will take some time to ensure all these .pdfs have proper headings.

If the Parish Council agrees that an accessibility audit would be a disproportionate burden, it needs to instruct the Clerk (as the webmaster) to undertake a basic accessibility check in preparation for producing an accessibility statement. Once the accessibility check has been undertaken the Parish Council will be in a position to determine what elements of the accessibility standard can be complied with and which elements would be a disproportionate burden.

14. Budget and Precept 2020/21

A copy of the proposed Budget for 2020/2021 and the Forecast to 2023 is attached. A small increase in the precept was suggested at the November meeting and so the Budget and Forecast contain a precept of £9,950 - an increase of £200. Other details in the Budget can be found on the Agenda for the November meeting (accessible from the Parish Council website if you no longer have a copy of the Agenda). A decision on the precept was deferred from the November meeting until the tax base for 2020/21 was known so that the impact the increase in the precept would have on Council Tax can be calculated. [The tax base is the number of Band D equivalent properties in Batcombe when taking into account the number of empty properties, various discounts (including 25% for single people) and the weighting of the different bands above and below Band D.]

Batcombe's tax base for 2020/21 is 216.9 which when revised for a 2.5% non-collection rate becomes 211.48. The revised tax base for 2019/20 was 210.9. A slightly higher tax base means that the same increase in precept will produce a slightly lower increase in Council Tax.

If the Parish Council were to leave its precept unchanged at £9,750, a Band D property with no discounts would have to pay £46.10 towards the precept in 2020/21 instead of £46.23 this year, a reduction of 0.28%. If, as suggested in the enclosed Budget, the Council increases its precept by £200 to £9,950 (an increase of 2.05% in the precept), a Band D property with no discounts would have to pay £47.05 towards the precept, an increase of 1.77%. Please note that it is this figure that appears on Council Tax bills.

15. Authorisation of Payment

£????.00	Dominic Conway – Grass cutting in December. (<i>Invoice not yet received.</i>)
£1,021.02	The Clerk – Salary for 3 rd Quarter. (<i>See enclosed sheet.</i>)
£97.79	The Clerk – Expenses for 3 rd Quarter. (<i>See enclosed sheet.</i>)

16. Other Business – matters of information only. *The Emergency Plan to be considered at the next meeting.*

17. Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 5th February 2020 at 7.30pm in the Old School, Batcombe.

Rob Sage

Rob Sage – Clerk

2nd January 2020