

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 4th December 2019 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 7.30pm.

Present - Councillors: Mary Comley – Chairman, Jayne Cox, Janet Jones, Ian Sage, David Stevens and Justin Witcombe.

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage and two members of the public.

4817 – Apologies for Absence: Peter Glaisher, Michael Gay – District Councillor, and Nigel Hewitt-Cooper – County Councillor.

4818 – Declarations of Interest: Justin Witcombe declared interests in item 4823 (Sewage Treatment Plant at Ash Tree Cottages) as a resident of Ash Tree Cottages and item 4824 (Allotments) as an allotment holder.

4819 – Public Participation: None.

4820 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 6th November 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4821 – Matters Arising: Playing Field – Justin Witcombe noted that the Playing Field hedge would need to be allowed to grow higher for several years before being laid and so it wasn't appropriate to obtain estimates for the laying of the hedge at this point.

4822 – District and County Councillors' Reports: The District Councillor had provided a report in relation to the following item.

4823 – Sewage Treatment Plant at Ash Tree Cottages: The District Councillor had reported that he had been in contact with the surveyor in charge and the works had been delayed while the design engineer finalised the design and an agreement was made for any compensation to the neighbouring landowners. He had also passed the surveyor's telephone number to Justin Witcombe who had been in contact with him. Justin reported that a local drainage contractor had tested the outflow pipe with dyed water and this was not the problem. Justin also reported that the surveyor was coming out to visit. Justin was confident the problem would now be dealt with but the work would not take place until the New Year. He hoped that Hastoes would now work with the local drainage contractor.

4824 – Allotments: The Clerk reported that the rent for seven of the ten allotments had now been paid and that Gary Butler had cut the hedge in the allotments field and removed the clippings. The Chairman reported that no progress had yet been made on replacing the tap on the water tank and it was noted that this would need to be done before any dry spells in the summer. **Action: The Chairman.**

4825 – Footpaths and Highways: The Chairman had written to Somerset Highways expressing the Parish Council's concerns about the shortcomings of the Snow Warden scheme. She had also requested three dumpy bags of salt including one for Westcombe and this had been agreed. A Westcombe resident asked if a second bag and salt could be placed in Westcombe and the Chairman agreed to ask for this. Ian Sage volunteered to have the bags of

salt delivered to his farm and he would transport them to the agreed locations on Hincombe Hill, top of Mill Lane and in Westcombe. **Action: The Chairman.**

The Chairman stated that she had not received any response to her letter from Somerset Highways other than an acknowledgement. Concerns were expressed that Somerset Highways would not do anything until there was an accident and that the burden of the voluntary salting of the roads fell on local contractors and farmers who were self-employed and were not able to do their work while working on the roads. A local resident suggested copying the letter to Somerset Highways to the County Councillor to remind him of his duty to his parishes. It was suggested that a dumpy bag of salt could be placed in Upton Noble on the school bus route. The Chairman to contact the Chair of the Upton Noble Parish Meeting. **Action: The Chairman.**

4826 – Playing Field - Maintenance Report: The Clerk reported that one of the locks on the electricity cabinet had been replaced but the other was missing. Ian Sage to follow this up with the local electrician undertaking the repair. **Action: Ian Sage.**

The Clerk noted that there was occasional evidence of moles in the Playing Field. He reported that he had turned off the water in the Playing Field and Justin Witcombe volunteered to drain the pipes in the bus shelter. **Action: Justin Witcombe.**

New Play Equipment: The Clerk reported that the total raised for the new play equipment was now £7,358, with additional sums promised but not yet received. Clare Kingston was organising another Bingo Evening on Saturday December 7th and asked for volunteers to help with the event. Jayne Cox was thanked for the item about the bonfire party she had placed in the parish magazine.

The Clerk reported that he had asked six companies to provide quotes for the new play equipment to ensure the Parish Council had three quotes when applying for the grant for the new play equipment. It was agreed that a meeting of the Working Party to include all Councillors and Clare Kingston would consider the quotes in detail at a date between the January and February meetings. The importance of the equipment being long-lasting and low maintenance was stressed. **Action: The Clerk.**

4827 – Planning Applications: There were no applications to consider.

Planning Application Updates: Listed Building Consent had been granted for the works at Donegal Cottage in Kale Street. As previously noted, this was for minor variations in the Listed Building Consent already granted.

The District Council had had no objection to the tree works at Stockley Cottage – pollarding a Eucalyptus.

4828 – Batcombe Heritage Room: The Clerk reported that the Village Hall Trust had taken advice from the Charity Commission and there was no issue with the Heritage Room occupying a room in the Old School and coming under the umbrella of the Village Hall Trust. Justin Witcombe reported that he had spoken to Justin Robinson of SALC and that there was no issue with the Clerk being the Parish Council's representative on the Heritage Room group.

A local resident expressed concerns at the Clerk being referred to as a trustee of the Heritage Room as he was not a Trustee. He also expressed concern that the Heritage Room asked for donations from those using its facilities and felt that the Parish Council records stored in the Heritage Room should be available free of charge. The Chairman promised to speak to the Village Hall Chairman to ensure that it was made clear that any items belonging to the Parish Council would be available free of charge. **Action: The Chairman.**

4829 – Administrative Issues: Justin Witcombe reported that according to Justin Robinson of SALC the Clerk had to call a meeting of the Staff Committee to undertake his annual appraisal. The Clerk to look into what was required and arrange a meeting. **Action: The Clerk.** The Clerk reported that he had completed the re-declaration of compliance with the Pensions Regulator that was required every three years. This stated that no member of staff was paid a workplace pension. Justin Witcombe asked that the Emergency Plan be placed on the Agenda for a meeting in the New Year. **Action: The Clerk.**

4830 - Authorisation of payments: Councillors authorised the following payments:

£80.00 Dominic Conway – Grass cutting in November.

£70.00 Gary Butler – Hedge cutting in the allotments field.

4831 – Other Business - Matters of Information Only: A report that the Shindig Weekender music festival would take place at Dillington House in 2020 instead of at Gilcombe Farm was noted.

The budget and precept would be decided at the January meeting when the tax base was known. **Action: The Clerk.**

It was agreed to ask Gary Butler to cut back the willow structure in the Playing Field. **Action: The Clerk.** The PCC were to be reminded of their offer of a donation for the use of the Playing Field for the Village Fete. **Action: The Clerk.** The Clerk noted that he would soon need a new Minute Book and he was authorised to purchase one. **Action: The Clerk.**

Janet Jones noted that Openreach were to provide fibre broadband to properties in Westcombe. The rest of Batcombe was not included as they were on a separate telephone exchange.

4832 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 8th January 2020 at 7.30pm in the Old School, Batcombe. David Stevens gave his apologies for this meeting.

M Comley

8/1/20