

# BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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## Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2020 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 7.30pm.

**Present - Councillors:** Mary Comley – Chairman, Jayne Cox, Peter Glaisher, Janet Jones, Ian Sage and Justin Witcombe.

**Also Present:** The Clerk – Rob Sage, and three members of the public.

**4867 – Apologies for Absence:** David Stevens and Michael Gay – District Councillor.

**4868 – Declarations of Interest:** Justin Witcombe declared an interest in item 4873 (Sewage treatment plant at Ash Tree Cottages) as a resident of Ash Tree Cottages and in item 4874 (Allotments) as an allotment holder.

**4869 – Public Participation:** The local resident who had requested better signposts for village footpaths at the previous meeting noted that the paths she was concerned about were not official footpaths.

**4870 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2020** were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**4871 – Matters Arising:** Westcombe Telephone Kiosk - Defibrillator – the Clerk reported that the Batcombe and Westcombe Defibrillator Group had decided not to use the telephone kiosk in Westcombe as the location of the Westcombe defibrillator and would find an alternative location in Westcombe. Ian Sage reported that he had replaced the bolts in the kiosk damaged when BT disconnected the electricity supply.

Old Fingerposts – Wanstrow Parish Council reported that the County Council would be willing to run a course on highway safety training that would enable volunteers to repair old fingerposts in Mendip if 25 volunteers had signed up to be trained. Jayne Cox, Ian Sage and Justin Witcombe volunteered to be trained.

**4872 – District and County Councillors' Reports:** A written report had been received from the District Councillor. He reported on the Sewage Treatment Plant at Ash Tree Cottages (*see below*) and had had a meeting with the business manager and the federation head at Upton Noble School and discussed various issues including classroom shortages and issues with traffic, parking and bad weather on the route to the school. He noted that Jayne Cox had volunteered Ian Sage to deliver salt to the school. The school were also asking the local parish councils, Batcombe, Wanstrow and Witham Friary for help in replacing obsolete computer hardware at a cost of £3,450. It was agreed to place this request on a future Agenda.

**Action: The Clerk.**

A written report had also been received from the County Councillor. The County Council had approved a £338m budget with no cuts to frontline services and £2m for better access to bus services in rural areas. A £1m climate change fund had been created and would be available for parish and town councils to bid for green initiatives in their parishes. Plans were in place to deal with the Covid-19 virus. The County Council Leader had formally written to the Secretary of State to put the case for a unitary council for Somerset. Brain in Hand a personalised app to provide support for people with mental health issues or learning

disabilities was being trialled. The County Council was deploying two teams to boost children's mental health. Two utility firms had been fined £30,000 and £20,000 after pleading guilty to roadworks offences. Connecting Devon and Somerset had launched a fresh procurement to find new contractors to roll out superfast broadband. Janet Jones stated that she had informed Truespeed that Westcombe now had highspeed broadband. Truespeed noted that they had hit a problem with their expected expansion because Nunney already had highspeed broadband and it was likely that Batcombe would have to wait for Openreach to provide highspeed broadband.

**4873 – Sewage Treatment Plant at Ash Tree Cottages:** Justin Witcombe reported that the work would be undertaken in two stages. The treatment plant would be replaced in March or April and the outflow pipe would then be tested for damage and if required this would be replaced in May at the request of the landowner. A neighbour expressed concern about the impact the work would have on her property and asked where the pipe ran. It was believed to be about 20 feet from her boundary.

**4874 – Allotments:** The Clerk reported that the rent for nine of the ten allotments had now been paid for and the remaining allotment holder had stated that she had paid by bank transfer. Ian Sage reported that he had repaired the tap on the water tank and was thanked by the Chairman.

**4875 – Footpaths and Highways:** The potholes at Snakelake had received some press publicity appearing in the Western Daily Press and on the front page of the Frome Standard. The Chairman volunteered to contact the South Somerset Area Manager of Somerset Highways and Bruton Town Council after it was noted that the potholes on the Mendip side of the boundary were marked for repair. **Action: The Chairman.**

The Clerk had e-mailed David Peake, the Highway Service Manager at the County Council, asking for details of the cost and feasibility of options for the Parish Council either paying for the salting of the road through Batcombe or arranging it with a local contractor. Mr Peake's response was that he would have to discuss this with colleagues before providing an answer, despite having been originally asked for this information in December 2018. It was noted that there was water running on the roads at several places including Hincombe Hill and Millards Hill. It was suggested that 70% of the gulleys in the parish were blocked and needed jetting. The Chairman volunteered to report this to Somerset Highways. **Action: The Chairman.**

The gate providing access to the footpath by the Old Chapel had been chained shut and the Clerk had written to the landowner reminding him of his responsibility to keep rights of way clear of obstruction. The landowner had replied to say that the gate was not chained but kept together with string that easily until. The Clerk showed the Council a photograph of the gate which had a chain wrapped around it, held in place by a bolt that was tied up with string that in turn was wrapped several times around the gate. Justin Witcombe volunteered to speak to the landowner and suggest he might consider installing a style. **Action: Justin Witcombe.**

After the new owners of Longleat Cottage had moved in the retaining wall for their garden had collapsed partially blocking Fry's Lane. Work to rebuild the wall was in hand.

It was noted that the road at Higher Alham was only closed when work was taking place on the culverts. The work was expected to take 33 days. A contractor would be undertaking repairs to the bridleway at Honeycliff, paid for by the Mendip Bridleways and Byways Association.

The Chairman reported that Wanstrow Parish Council had offered to pay to open up Knoll Lane. It was noted that this was not an official right of way and so would need to be done

with the landowner's permission. It was currently insured by the MBBA as a permissive route.

**4876 – Playing Field - Maintenance Report:** The Clerk had immobilized the zip wire because the seat was too close to the ground. Ian Sage reported that it was now running at a safe height. The moles were still active in the Playing Field and Justin Witcombe volunteered to speak to the molecatcher. **Action: Justin Witcombe.** Ian Sage had replaced the net removed from one of the goals.

The Fete Committee had requested that the electricity supply to the Playing Field be upgraded. The Clerk reported that current supply is single phase, 230 Volts, alternating current at 50Hz, with a maximum capacity of 10kVA or 23kVA (differing reports from Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks). SSEN could upgrade the supply but need to know the kVA required in order to provide a quote or a budget estimate. Justin Witcombe declared an interest as he helped with the Fete. He had suggested to the Fete Committee that they use gas powered urns and volunteered to get a list of items using electricity at the Fete. An electrician would need to provide an estimate of the load.

**New Play Equipment:** The Clerk reported that he had been notified that the grant of £1,250 from the County Council's Improving Lives Grant Scheme would be paid that day. Thanks to Peter Glaisher a donation of £500 had been received from T G Green and Co. The Clerk to write a letter of thanks. **Action: The Clerk.** This brought the total money raised for the new play equipment to just over £10,000.

Ian Sage and the Clerk had not yet been able to specify particular multi-play items from each company that would be comparable and more inclusive and then ask for revised quotes. **Action: Ian Sage and The Clerk.**

**4877 – Planning Applications:** Planning Application No: 2020/0246/LBC - Alterations to existing listed wall; Cherry Tree Cottage, Batcombe – Listed Building Consent. The wall was the boundary wall between Cherry Tree Cottage and the garden of Boords Farm which was a listed building and would need to be altered to allow the rear extension to Cherry Tree Cottage which had received planning permission. It was decided to recommend that the decision was left to the Conservation Officer who would be able to judge the impact of the alteration to the wall.

**Planning Application Updates:** The Clerk noted that an application had been made to build an all-weather synthetic grass tennis court in the field adjoining the garden of Rockwells House to the south-west of the house. Concerns over this application had been raised by neighbours of Rockwells House and as a result the application had been withdrawn to allow the applicant to consider the proposal further.

**4878 – Annual Parish Meeting:** At the suggestion of the District Councillor, the Chairman had invited Jen Gale of Sustainable(ish) to speak at the Annual Parish Meeting. The District Councillor to be asked to explain the new recycling system. Councillors volunteered to provide refreshments.

**4879 – Review of Emergency Plan:** The Emergency Plan was revised and updated in November 2018 thanks to Justin Witcombe in persuading local residents to volunteer to help in an emergency. This had been updated by the Clerk and a copy for Councillors was enclosed with the Agendas. It was noted that access to the Plan was restricted as it contained the personal details of volunteers. Councillors added their mobile phone numbers to the plan.

The Emergency Management Team was comprised of the Chairman, Vice Chairman, Clerk and a fourth member who would shortly be leaving Batcombe. It was agreed that the fourth

member should now be Justin Witcombe, given his involvement in the development of the Emergency Plan.

**4880 – Review of Schedule of Assets:** A copy of the Schedule of Assets had been distributed with the Agendas. The only change from the last review was the removal of the rotting multi-play equipment from the Playing Field. As the values in the Schedule of Assets were the purchase values, this reduced the Parish Council's fixed assets by £9,450 to £14,439.

**4881 – Review of Risk Management Policy and Insurance Cover:** A copy of the Risk Assessment and Management document had been distributed with the Agendas and was unchanged from the previous year.

The Parish Council had entered into a new three-year binding agreement with Came & Co last year. The insurance premium was £338 last year and included Public Liability and Employers Liability of £10 million each and Fraud and Dishonesty Cover (in case the Clerk runs off with the precept). The Playing Field equipment, the notice board opposite Church Farm and the Westcombe Telephone Kiosk were also insured.

**4882 - Authorisation of payments:** Councillors authorised the following payment:

£25.12      water2business – Playing Field water supply

**4883 – Other Business - Matters of Information Only:** The Staffing Committee would agree a date for the Clerk's annual review when all the members were present. Peter Glaisher reported that he had asked a local tree surgeon to look at the tree in the corner of the Playing Field.

**4884 – Date and Time of Next Meeting:** Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 at 6.45pm in the Jubilee Hall, Batcombe to be followed by the Annual Parish Meeting at 7.30pm

*[Note: these meetings were later cancelled due to the coronavirus restrictions.]*

M Comley

2/9/20