

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 4th November 2020 via Zoom, commencing at 7.30pm.

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

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage, the District Councillor – Michael Gay and one member of the public joined at item 4937.

4952 – Apologies for Absence: Apologies had been received from David Stevens and Justin Witcombe.

4953 – Declarations of Interest: None.

4954 – Public Participation: None.

4955 – Minutes of the Meetings held on Wednesday 7th and Thursday 22nd October 2020 were agreed as a correct record. The Chairman to sign at a later date.

4956 – Matters Arising: Bartletts Quarry – The Chairman reported back on a meeting of the Torr/Colemans Liaison Group and the briefing provided on the application to recommence quarrying works at Bartlett’s Quarry. The District Councillor noted that when the application to deepen the Torr Works quarry had been made an assertion had been made that this would have no impact on water levels in Batcombe because there was a geological fault between the quarries and Batcombe. The District Councillor suggested collecting evidence of any impact on the water supplies. He also suggested applying for a grant to have a survey done on water resilience in the parish. The Chairman to discuss this with the District Councillor and Parish Councillors indicated their support for this idea. **Action: The Chairman.** The Chairman reported that she had put a comment on the application to reopen Bartletts Quarry noting the parish’s concerns about the water supply.

Website Accessibility – The Clerk reported that the subheadings on the website were now corrected styled as headings.

Broadband Provision – Peter Glaisher reported that a wireless mast would be temporarily installed on the church tower to extend the wi-fi broadband signal further around the village and read a letter regarding the installation from the Parochial Church Council (PCC). The PCC had requested that this letter be published on the Parish Council website and this was agreed.

4957 – District and County Councillors’ Reports: The District Councillor reported that he had been appointed as Vice Chair of Audit. He drew the Parish Council’s attention to grants for home insulation and asked for Councillors to let him know of any issues arising from the forthcoming lockdown. He noted that there was money available for costs occurring to parishes as a result of the pandemic. The District Councillor to provide the Clerk with details. 245 electors had objected to the proposed Greencore development in Evercreech and the District Councillor promised to keep the Parish Council updated.

A written report had been received from the County Councillor and distributed to Parish Councillors before the meeting.

4958 – Sewage Treatment Plant at Ash Tree Cottages: The Chairman had sent the letter to the Chief Executive of Hastoes suggested at the October meeting and had received a response from Stuart Damon, the surveyor dealing with the issue, which stated that Hastoes and their solicitors were working tirelessly to get this matter resolved. The District Councillor reported that no further progress had been made. David Stevens had proposed sending additional letters to the Chief Executive and to the landowner concerned. Concerns about the impact of the ongoing issue on the residents and neighbours were expressed. It was agreed to amend the letters to include these concerns and then send them. **Action: The Chairman.**

4959 – Tackling Loneliness Digitally: The local branch of the Royal British Legion had been contacted by the Red Cross to inform them of their Tackling Loneliness Digitally programme www.redcross.org.uk/loneliness-resources which provided online resources for those who may be feeling lonely and their Digital Loneliness Classroom which offered participants the chance to learn skills to help those who may be experiencing loneliness. It was suggested that the local RBL write an article for the parish magazine **Action: Janet Jones.**

4960 – Footpaths and Highways: Details of Somerset Highways' pre-salting network for the winter had been published and as in previous years the A359 (Bruton-Frome) and the B3081 (Bruton-Evercreech) roads would be gritted but not the road through Batcombe. It was noted that a grit box had appeared on Hincombe Hill. Peter Glaisher stated that he would put out the salt bags in Westcombe. **Action: Peter Glaisher.** Clare Kingston asked for people to brush up the fallen leaves that were blocking the drainage in Westcombe.

The Chairman's article and diagram about overhanging hedges has been published in the parish magazine. Peter Glaisher had spoken to the owner of the property on Westcombe Hill regarding the overhanging hedges and she was happy to deal with these. Complaints had been received about the fact that the field-sides of hedges were cut before the road-sides but it was noted that this was done because of the practicalities of working in the fields. The Chairman to put an article in the parish magazine encouraging people to clear gulleys of fallen leaves. **Action: The Chairman.**

The Chairman reported that Honeycliffe bridleway had been closed because it was unsafe for horses as a result of damage caused by the volume of water flowing down the track. She hoped that the Mendip Bridleways and Byways Association could work with Somerset Highways to get repairs done but the cost would be significant.

4961 – Playing Field - Maintenance Report: The electricity cabinet in the Playing Field had been broken into and both locks were now broken. The Chairman volunteered to get the cabinet secured with a combination padlock. **Action: The Chairman.** The Clerk noted that the warning signs had also been torn down and he had ordered replacements. It was agreed to put a short article in the parish magazine noting that damage had been done in the Playing Field. **Action: Janet Jones and Peter Glaisher.** The Clerk reported that the moles previously reported in the Playing Field had not stayed and so he had not contacted the molecatcher – but now there was renewed evidence of moles. It was agreed to wait to see what developed before contacting the molecatcher.

New Play Equipment: The Clerk reported that an offer of the full grant £58,976 from Viridor Credits had been received and this would mean that there would be £66,000 to spend on new play equipment. The Coronavirus lockdown meant that it would be difficult to hold a public meeting for residents to comment on the three quotes obtained. The Clerk noted that he

needed to go back to the play equipment companies to determine whether the quotes were still valid and when they would be able to undertake the work. He also noted that there might be a cashflow issue in paying for the VAT on the equipment which would not be a problem if the invoices became due after the Parish Council had received its precept in April. Arrangements for the meeting of the Working Party to be made at the December meeting. It was noted that residents' feedback might have to be done online with information provided on the website due to the coronavirus restrictions. It was agreed not to announce the grant until the formal offer had been received.

4962 – Planning Applications:

Planning Application No: 2020/1994/HSE Extension to existing residential dwelling. Donegal Cottage, Kale Street, Batcombe – Householder Application.

Planning Application No: 2020/1995/LBC Extension to existing residential dwelling. Donegal Cottage, Kale Street, Batcombe – Listed Building Consent.

It was noted that this was a resubmission of the previous applications for the extension to Donegal Cottage in order to extend the works commencement period as work has been delayed due to the pandemic. The Parish Council agreed to recommend approval with the proviso that there were no changes from the previous application.

Planning Application Updates:

The Clerk reported that a planning application had been received for the felling of three Ash trees with Ash dieback at Batcombe House. The deadline would be before the next meeting and the Clerk would ask for an extension.

4963 – Update on Budget for Year Ending 31st March 2021: Janet Jones reported that she had checked the quarterly bank reconciliation after the last meeting.

An updated projection on the current year's budget had been distributed with the Agenda. The Clerk noted that there had been no significant changes since the update reported at that the last meeting.

It was noted that donations could still be received for the play equipment.

4964 – Budget and Precept for Year Ending 31st March 2022: A budget for the year ending 31st March 2022 had been distributed with the Agendas, along with a forecast for the years 2021-2024. The next Parish Council election would take place in 2023/2024 and the Parish Council would need 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 Clerk noted that the budget and the forecast were produced on the basis of taking the projected figures for this year (apart from one-off expenditures) and adding small increases and was an opportunity for the Council to review the level of its grants.

The budget had been prepared on the assumption that the play equipment would have been purchased in the current year. On this basis the budget predicted a surplus of £1,940 if the precept was unchanged at £9,950. This would leave £11,485 in the Council's funds at the end of 2021/22. Given that around £1,000 of this would be earmarked for the allotments, this would leave reserves that are above 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 would be more than sufficient to cover the cost of a by-election. It also allowed some flexibility to spend more of the Parish Council's own money on the Playing Field if required.

The Clerk recommended that a decision on the level of the precept was not made until more information about the play equipment was available and until the tax base for 2021/22 had

been determined in January so that the impact of any increase on Council Tax would be known and this was agreed.

4965 - Authorisation of payment: Councillors authorised the following payment:

£80.00 Dominic Conway – Grass cutting in the Playing Field in October.

£78.00 The Parish News – Photocopying for the past year.

4966 – Other Business - Matters of Information Only: No HGV Signs – the Chairman had heard back from Somerset Highways about additional signage on the No HGV signs. It was suggested that a sign telling HGV drivers that they would not be able to get through the village would be appropriate and the Chairman would investigate if there was suitable signage. **Action: The Chairman.**

Remembrance Sunday – The Chairman reported that Royal British Legion had undertaken the risk assessment for the Act of Remembrance on Remembrance Sunday.

4967 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 2nd December 2020 at 7.30pm via Zoom.

M Comley 2/12/20