

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

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You are Summoned to the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council to be held remotely via Zoom at 7.30pm on Wednesday 13th January 2021

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 2nd December 2020 to be agreed. *Attached. The Minutes will need to be signed later.*

5. Matters Arising – information updates only.
Nothing that does not appear on the Agenda below.

6. District and County Councillors' Reports

An opportunity for the District and County Councillors to report to the meeting, either via Zoom or in writing.

7. Sewage Treatment Plant at Ash Tree Cottages

An opportunity for an update on progress on the work to replace the sewage treatment plant at Ash Tree Cottages. Hastoes have decided to adjust the installation of the new treatment plant to avoid the need to negotiate a new easement with the owner of the neighbouring field.

8. Westcombe Telephone Kiosk – Use as a Book Exchange

A request has been made to use the Westcombe Telephone Kiosk as a book exchange. Is the Parish Council happy to give permission for this?

9. Footpaths and Highways

We have been notified of a road closure by the bungalow above Batcombe Lodge to replace a decayed telegraph pole. The works are expected to take place on January 28th and to last for one day.

The Chairman to report back on her conversation with the landowner of the field next to the Chapel car park who has complained about the trees that were planted in the car park to mark the Queen's Silver Jubilee which are apparently obstructing tractors working in the field. Ian Sage has obtained a quote from a tree surgeon to ensure a clearance height of 5.5m for all four trees with some balancing on the roadside of the trees. This would cost £275 + VAT. It should be noted that neither the carpark or the trees belong to or are the responsibility of the Parish Council, although the Parish Council does pay for the grass in the carpark to be cut and has paid for work on the roadside of the trees in the past (when they were obstructing parking).

10. Playground.

Maintenance Report: *The electricity cabinet still needs to be secured. Ian Sage has obtained a quote from a tree surgeon to crown lift the two trees behind the cricket nets to give a clearance of 1.5m and to rescue the oak tree in the corner of the Playing Field by lightly thinning the upper canopy and managing its size. This would cost £225 + VAT.*

New Play Equipment: *A public consultation has been undertaken on the new play equipment with a limited response. The Working Party has met twice, once with all available Parish Councillors in attendance, and is recommending acceptance of the quote from Sutcliffe Play (subject to discussions with Sutcliffe Play over some details of the play equipment and its installation). Notes of the Working Party meetings have been circulated to Councillors, but essentially the equipment offered by Sutcliffe Play appears more robust and their multi-play equipment is better suited in design and size to the available area in the Playing Field. Although the Sutcliffe Play quote is the highest of the three quotes obtained the Parish Council has sufficient funds to cover the cost. It is hoped to have confirmation from Sutcliffe Play and from the grant provider, Viridor Credits, on the outstanding details before placing an order. A decision on an order needs to be made at this meeting if the installation is to begin in March/April.*

11. Planning Applications:

Planning Application No: 2020/2671/TCA T1 (A) - Yew Tree - Reduce to 8 feet. T2 (B) - Yew Tree - Remove lowest limb on right. T3 (C and D) - Sycamores - Crown Lift to 25 feet.

Little Court, Gold Hill, Batcombe – Works/Felling Trees in a CA.

These tree works are intended to improve the light in the garden of Little Court. All four trees are on or close to the boundary with Batcombe House. The application can be viewed on the District Council's planning website <https://publicaccess.mendip.gov.uk/online-applications/> Just enter the reference number into the search engine. Due to the coronavirus restrictions there will not be an opportunity to view a paper application.

Planning Application Updates.

Planning permission and Listed Building Consent have been granted for the extension to Donegal Cottage in Kale Street. Planning permission has also been approved for the two wireless broadband antennae installed on the chimney of 12 Kale Street.

An application to allow the variation of conditions on planning permission 2011/2077 (concerning the variation of conditions on planning permission 2010/2180 regarding the approval of materials) for Ash Tree House has been withdrawn.

Two representatives of Ridge and Partners LLP will be attending the February meeting of the Parish Council to talk about a Para 79 house proposal on behalf of Simon Waterfield of Valley View Farm.

12. Budget and Precept for Year Ending 31st March 2022

The budget for the year ending 31st March 2022 and the forecast for the years 2021-2024 that were distributed with November's Agenda are attached. There are no changes since November except that a 2% increase in the Clerk's salary may have been a bit optimistic in light of the public sector pay freeze that has been announced – see November's Agenda for details of individual items in the budget (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 2021/22 was known so that the impact the increase in the precept will 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 2021/22 is 216.5 which when revised for a 2.5% non-collection rate becomes 211.09. The revised tax base for 2020/21 was 211.48. A slightly lower tax base means that the same increase in precept will produce a slightly higher increase in Council Tax.

If the Parish Council were to leave its precept unchanged at £9,950, a Band D property with no discounts would have to pay £47-14 towards the precept in 2021/22 instead of £47-05 this year, an increase of 0.19%. A reduction of £25 in the precept to £9,925 would see a small reduction (0.06%) appearing on Council Tax bills instead of an increase.

The budget has been prepared on the assumption that the play equipment will have been purchased this year. On this basis the budget predicts a surplus of £1,940 if the precept is unchanged at £9,950. This would leave £11,485 in our funds at the end of 2021/22. Given that around £1,000 of this will be earmarked for the allotments, this leaves us with 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 should be more than sufficient to cover the cost of a by-election. It also allows some flexibility to spend more of the Parish Council's own money on the Playing Field if required.

13. Authorisation of Payments

- £15.00 Somerset Playing Field Association. *Subscription.*
- £1,021.02 The Clerk – Salary for 3rd Quarter. *See enclosed sheet.*
- £123.03 The Clerk – Expenses for 3rd Quarter. *See enclosed sheet.*

14. Other Business – matters of information only.

We have received a request to help promote the 2021 Census which will take place on March 21st and will be the first census to take place predominantly online.

15. Date and Time of Next Meeting:

Wednesday 3rd February 2021 at 7.30pm via Zoom.

Rob Sage

Rob Sage – Clerk

6th January 2021