

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 13th January 2021 via Zoom, commencing at 7.30pm.

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

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage, the District Councillor – Michael Gay, the County Councillor – Nigel Hewitt-Cooper and three members of the public.

4988 – Apologies for Absence: None.

4989 – Declarations of Interest: Jayne Cox and Ian Sage declared an interest in the authorisation of the payment of the Clerk’s salary as relatives of the Clerk.

4990 – Public Participation: Clare Kingston thanked Peter Glaisher and his son for clearing the drains along the street in Westcombe.

The District Councillor thanked those who responded to the local landscape consultation and the Chairman for her efforts in completing a grant application for a water resilience report. He noted that he would be speaking at the regulation meeting regarding the re-opening of Bartletts Quarry and would mention Batcombe’s concerns about the water supply. The Chairman noted that she would also be attending. The Chairman stated that she would e-mail Councillors the details of the grant application.

4991 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 2nd December 2020 were agreed as a correct record. The Chairman to sign at a later date.

4992 – Matters Arising: None.

4993 – District and County Councillors’ Reports: A written report had been received from the County Councillor and distributed to Parish Councillors before the meeting. The County Councillor updated the Council on the current Covid-19 position and the significant increase in cases. Vaccination centres were now opening across the county and over 700 County Council staff were involved in manning these. Janet Jones noted that people in the parish had been notified of their appointment for their vaccination. It was suggested that the County Council Covid Helpline Number should be placed on the Parish Council website. The County Councillor left the meeting at this point to attend another Parish Council meeting. The District Councillor noted the need to be extremely careful in avoiding contact with people. In response to a question from a resident it was noted that outdoor playgrounds could remain open but the Clerk stated that users should take extra care.

4994 – Sewage Treatment Plant at Ash Tree Cottages: It was noted that 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, although this meant laying a pipe through the cottage gardens. The Chairman had spoken to Stuart Damon at Hastoes and he had met with the contractors to agree the work needed. It was reported that some preliminary work had begun and it was hoped the work would be done before the weather warmed up.

4995 – Westcombe Telephone Kiosk – Use as a Book Exchange: A request had been made to use the Westcombe Telephone Kiosk as a book exchange. Concerns were raised that the books would become damp and the kiosk would become a book dump. It was noted that it was necessary for someone to look after the kiosk and shelving would need to be installed and it would be better waiting until Covid restrictions were eased and the weather was drier. David Stevens and Peter Glaisher volunteered to speak to the person who had made the request. **Action: David Stevens & Peter Glaisher**

4996 – Footpaths and Highways: The Parish Council had been notified of a road closure by the bungalow above Batcombe Lodge to replace a decayed telegraph pole. The works were expected to take place on January 28th and to last for one day. Jayne Cox reported that an unknown person had gritted the whole of Portway Hill during the recent icy weather. No problems had been reported as a result of ice on the roads

Ian Sage had obtained a quote from a tree surgeon to ensure a clearance height of 5.5m for the four trees that were overhanging a farmer's fields in the centre of the village and apparently obstructing tractors working in the field. This would cost £275 + VAT. Given that the trees were not the responsibility of the Parish Council (although the Parish Council had paid for work where the trees were obstructing carparking in the past, it was decided not to undertake the work on the trees as this would set a precedent for the future. The Chairman offered to inform the landowner of this. **Action: The Chairman.** The Chairman had reported a loose kerb at the carpark opposite Church Farm and a resident noted that it had been repaired.

Concerns were raised about overhanging hedges in Mill Lane. The Chairman had reported the need to repaint the white lines at the bottom of Back Lane to Somerset Highways. The promised ditching at the top of the Honeycliff Bridleway to reduce the flow of water down the bridleway had been put back to the next financial year because of a lack of funds at Somerset Highways.

The Chairman noted that residents of Mill Lane had expressed concerns about effluent running down the road and believed to come from another property on the lane. There were also issues with parking making it difficult to access properties at the bottom of the lane for bin collection or by emergency vehicles. It was noted that there was a requirement to ensure that your property had an up-to-date sewage treatment before it could be sold. Further concerns were raised about the effluent freezing in the recent cold weather and making access difficult – and about chickens roaming freely despite the Bird Flu restrictions that had been in place since December. It was agreed that a letter should be sent to the property concerned expressing their neighbours' concerns and asking how they intended to address them. **Action: The Clerk.**

4997 – Playing Field - Maintenance Report: The Chairman reported that the electricity cabinet in the Playing Field had been secured and the key given to the Clerk. No other damage was reported in the Playing Field. Ian Sage had obtained a quote of £225 + VAT 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. Ian noted that the tree surgeon had stated that the oak tree was safe but needed some maintenance. It was agreed to accept the quote and take the money from the maintenance budget for the Playing Field. **Action: The Clerk.**

New Play Equipment: A public consultation had been undertaken on the new play equipment and the Working Party had met twice, once with all available Parish Councillors in attendance, and had recommended acceptance of a revised quote from Sutcliffe Play South West. Notes of the Working Party meetings had been circulated to Councillors and the recommendation was made on the basis that the equipment offered by Sutcliffe Play appeared

more robust and their multi-play equipment was better suited in design and size to the available area in the Playing Field.

A revised Sutcliffe Play quote was for £62,334 had been received - £4,500 lower than their previous quote. Although this was still the highest of the three quotes obtained the Parish Council had sufficient funds to cover the cost with a reasonable contingency fund. The new quote included a 25m cableway instead of a 20m one as previously quoted and this would need to be checked. It was noted that the toddler swing could be placed in the same frame as a junior swing and it was agreed to do this as it would enable the toddler swing to be retained when the basket swing replaced the present toddler swing - although a user of the Playing Field noted that some children liked the two junior swings next to each other. It was noted that the Cricket Club had donated £600 for the Playing Field. Ian Sage was thanked for being willing to undertake much of the preliminary work in preparing the Playing Field which had made a significant contribution to the reduced quote. It was agreed to accept the quote from Sutcliffe Play and place an order for the equipment quoted for. The Clerk to keep Viridor Credits informed. **Action: The Clerk.** It was noted that there was a maintenance fund in the Parish Council budget to ensure the equipment was kept in good repair.

The District Councillor left the meeting at this point.

4998 – 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. The Parish Council decided to recommend approval as there were no objections to the proposed tree works. The need to maintain trees that people plant was noted.

Planning Application Updates:

Planning permission and Listed Building Consent had been granted for the extension to Donegal Cottage in Kale Street. Planning permission had 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 had been withdrawn. It was noted that Ash Tree House had recently been sold.

Two representatives of Ridge and Partners LLP would 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. A time limit of 15 minutes was suggested with an opportunity for questions.

4999 – 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 produced for the November meeting were distributed with the Agenda. There were no changes to the budget except to note that a 2% increase in the Clerk's salary may have been somewhat optimistic in light of the public sector pay freeze that had been announced.

A decision on the precept had been 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. Batcombe's tax base for 2021/22 was 216.5 which when revised for a 2.5% non-collection rate became 211.09. The revised tax base for 2020/21 was 211.48. A slightly lower tax base meant that an unchanged precept would produce a very small increase in Council Tax. The Clerk noted that 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. It was agreed to reduce the 2021/22 precept to £9,925. This would leave £11,485 in the Parish Council's

funds at the end of 2021/22, of which £1,000 would be earmarked for the allotments. This was considered to be an appropriate level of reserves.

5000 - Authorisation of payment: Councillors authorised the following payments:

£15.00 Somerset Playing Field Association. This was the annual subscription.

£1,021.02 The Clerk – Salary for 3rd Quarter.

£123.03 The Clerk – Expenses for 3rd Quarter.

5001 – Other Business - Matters of Information Only: The Clerk was asked to ensure that the fact that the new play equipment had been ordered was reported in the parish magazine and on the Parish Council website.

The Parish Council had 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.

Local residents asked questions about access to the Heritage Room in the Old School which was currently closed because of the coronavirus; and about how temporary the Voneus antenna on the Church tower would be, as it was interfering with the wi-fi in their house. It was noted that Voneus were planning to eventually install fibre and replace the antennae but this would not be for some years. The residents concerned were advised to talk to the Parochial Church Council and to Voneus.

5002 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 3rd February 2020 at 7.30pm via Zoom.

M Comley

21.02.21