

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 7th April 2021 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 two members of the public.

5032 – Apologies for Absence: Justin Witcombe and David Stevens.

5033 – Declarations of Interest: Ian Sage and Jayne Cox declared an interest in item 5045 – authorisation of payment to the Clerk as relatives of the Clerk.

5034 – Public Participation: None.

5035 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 3rd March 2021 were agreed as a correct record. The Chairman to sign at a later date.

5036 – Matters Arising: The Chairman noted that she had attended a meeting of the Torr Works Liaison Committee and promised to circulate the Minutes although there had been no discussion of any issues relating to Batcombe. The District Councillor noted that the quarry would be appealing the decision to refuse permission to re-open Colemans Quarry and that the Environment Agency were looking at the water table around the quarries but would not be reporting until 2022/23.

5037 – Sewage Treatment Plant at Ash Tree Cottages: The Chairman reported a conversation with Stuart Damon from Hastoes who had said that work on the treatment plant should begin on April 19th.

Written reports from the District and County Councillors had been received and distributed to Parish Councillors. The District Councillor noted that the Government had not extended the legislation allowing Councils to meet online beyond May 7th. He also noted briefly the contents of his written report, including the idea of No Mow May. It was agreed to publish the District and County Councillors' reports on the Parish Council website. **Action: The Clerk.**

5038 – Allotments: The Parish Council authorised the Clerk to sign a new lease for the allotments field as the current lease would come to an end at the end of April. A copy of the new lease had been distributed to Councillors and was unchanged from the previous lease except for the dates. It was agreed to re-imburse an allotment holder who had paid for the current year before giving up her allotment after noting that this was not the allotment on which a large amount of rubbish had been left.

5039 – Footpaths and Highways: The Chairman updated the Parish Council on correspondence received from the residents of Mill Lane regarding the issues with cars, sewage and chickens. The Chairman volunteered to speak to the residents and if there were still concerns to hand over the issue of the obstruction of the highway to the PCSO to deal with. **Action: The Chairman.**

The Chairman also reported that a ditching order was going to be issued by Somerset Highways to improve the ditches at the top of the Honeycliff Bridleway in order to reduce the amount of water running down the bridleway.

The Parish Council had also been notified of another HGV that had become stuck at the junction at the top of Holly Hill. A resident had asked for clearer signs on the road into Batcombe as the driver claimed not to have seen them and were positioned too late to turn back. The Council felt that the signs were clearly visible and there was sufficient room to turn at the Hedgestocks junction but that the signs had been ignored by the driver. It was noted that the driver delivering the new play equipment had stopped at the signs and phoned for instructions. The Clerk to ask Peter Green at Evercreech to remind drivers to avoid Batcombe and also to contact the owner of the HGV. **Action: The Clerk.**

The Parish Council had been notified of a Temporary Road Closure Notice for Bruton Lane in Upton Noble. The road was likely to be closed for three days from April 20th to allow a duct to be laid for BT Openreach. Bruton Lane is the lane opposite Church Lane in Upton Noble. It was noted that this was part of a one-way system used by parents delivering children to the school and so its closure in term time was likely to cause chaos.

5040 – Playing Field - Maintenance Report: As the installation of the new play equipment included a post-installation safety inspection, it was agreed to cancel the annual safety inspection this year. **Action: The Clerk.**

New Play Equipment: In preparation for the installation of the new play equipment, volunteers had removed the play bark, the supports for the old zip wire and one of the swing frames. The Parish Council thanked Ian Sage for organising this; Steve Comley for providing his digger to help with the work; Peter Glaisher for cutting back the Playing Field hedge and the willow structure to make room for the new play equipment; and Sharon Witcombe for providing the volunteers with cups of tea.

The Parish Council had received a request from a teenager who uses the Playing Field for larger goals (to make practice more realistic) and a new surface for the cricket nets. The Clerk to respond stating that the Parish Council were planning to renew the surface of the cricket nets in stage two of the Playing Field improvements but that the goals had already been ordered and were the appropriate size for the pitch. **Action: The Clerk.**

Sutcliffe Play had requested that the Parish Council sign a Statement For The Determination of Soil Contamination For Proposed Play Area Construction which basically stated that the play equipment was not being installed on contaminated land and the Clerk was authorised to do this. **Action: The Clerk.**

Clare Kingston requested an update on progress on the play equipment project for the Mendip Lottery website which was bringing an average of £10 a month for the play equipment. **Action: The Clerk.**

The Parish Council agreed to hold a celebration to mark the installation of the new play equipment on the afternoon of Saturday July 17th when hopefully all the coronavirus restrictions would have been lifted. Details to be arranged at the next meeting. It was suggested that children be asked to write about what they liked about the new equipment or draw a picture. It was also suggested contacting the Shepton Journal for some publicity.

The Clerk reported that he had been in contact with the insurance company and the new equipment would be insured once it was handed over by the supplier.

Car Boot Sale Request: The Annual Church Fete was unlikely to go ahead this year because of continuing restrictions and the Parish Council had received a request from the organisers to allow a car boot sale to take place in the Playing Field instead. The Parish Council felt they would be better holding a car boot sale in the Village Hall car park and given the limited space in the Playing Field and the difficulty of large numbers of vehicles accessing the field without damaging the new safety surfacing declined the request. The Clerk to respond. **Action: The Clerk.**

5041 – Planning Applications: The District Councillor was asked if he felt there would be a determination of the Valley View planning application soon and he felt that this would take some time and noted that there was a long waiting list for items to go to the Planning Board.

Planning Application No: 2021/0417/FUL Erection of agricultural barn and stables, creation of yard area and new access track (part retrospective as barn and yard already exist). Carrot Hill Farmhouse, Spargrove Lane, Batcombe – Full Application. The applicant had stated that he had believed that the building of the barn was covered by Agricultural Permitted Development Rights – the property being part of a farm of 33 acres – but he had failed to make the required Prior Notification Application which cannot be made retrospectively. He was therefore applying for retrospective planning permission for the barn and yard as well as planning permission for the stables and a new access track. The Parish Council was concerned at the creeping domestication of agricultural land that it saw taking place at this property, noting in addition to the current retrospective application, the building of a tennis court at the property partially on agricultural land without planning permission and the gradual extension of the domestic curtilage into the surrounding agricultural land. The Parish Council also felt that there was no current need for a track. As a result the Parish Council decided to recommend refusal of planning permission. The Clerk was also asked to inform Planning Enforcement of the Council’s concerns about creeping domestication and the erection of the tennis court partially on agricultural land without planning permission. **Action: The Clerk.**

The Clerk reported that notification of an application for retrospective planning permission at Field House on Baileys Lane in Westcombe had been received too late for consideration at this meeting and that it might be necessary to hold an additional meeting to consider it.

Planning Application No: 2021/0616/HSE - Insertion of new windows to east elevation. Church Barn, Church Farm Barns, Batcombe – Householder Application. The Parish Council recommended refusal of permission on the grounds that the addition of the windows and door to the east elevation of Church Barn would have a negative impact on the Conservation Area and the open space between the Grade I listed Church, Grade II listed Old School and the Grade II listed Church Farmhouse. The original design of the barn conversions on the Church Farm site had been intended to preserve the feel of the historic farm courtyard with the barn conversions retaining the appearance of single storey rural barns and the Parish Council felt that allowing these additional windows and door would diminish the historic built environment by detracting from the appearance of the historic farm courtyard with inward facing barns. There were also concerns that the additional windows would result in complaints about noise from the Jubilee Hall.

It was suggested that there was a need to encourage people who had submitted applications to attend the Parish Council meeting at which their application was discussed. The Clerk noted that once the pandemic was passed it would be possible to deliver Agendas to people making

applications and their immediate neighbours to make them aware of the meetings.

Planning Application No: 2021/0724/TCA T1 – Crimson King Maple: fell to ground level. T2 – Norway Maple: pollard by approx. 3m exist). Netherlea, Back Lane, Batcombe – Works/Felling Trees in a CA. The Parish Council recommended approval as the garden was clearly overgrown with trees.

Planning Application Updates.

The District Council had had no objection to the felling of the Cherry trees at Church View and planning permission had been granted for the boot room single storey extension at Carrot Hill Farmhouse. Planning permission with conditions had also been granted for the proposed tennis court, swimming pool, greenhouse and associated groundworks in position of approved potting shed at Lower Eastcombe Farm. The conditions included a surface water drainage scheme, a noise limit on installed equipment and no external lighting without a lighting design for bats.

Concerns about the extension at 2 Wickham Cottages continued to be raised by one of the neighbours, stating that they did not receive notification of the planning application from Mendip District Council and suggesting that in future the Parish Council should check that all neighbours have received notification of any planning applications being considered. The Clerk had noted the impracticality of this suggestion. The Parish Council did not feel that it could take on responsibility for ensuring that all neighbours on the consultation list had been consulted. Delivery of an Agenda to applicants and their neighbours was a courtesy and the onus was very much on residents to ensure that they were kept informed.

5042 – Nomination of The Three Horseshoes as an Asset of Community Value: A group of local residents were seeking to nominate The Three Horseshoes as an Asset of Community Value. This would not prevent the owner from applying for a change of use - but would mean that if The Three Horseshoes was put up for sale, the sale could be delayed for up to six months to allow the community time to raise the funds to bid for it. One of the residents had asked if the Parish Council would be prepared to write a letter in support of the nomination and this was agreed, noting that the pub was an important community asset. **Action: The Clerk.**

5043 – Review of Risk Management Policy and Insurance Cover: A copy of the Risk Assessment and Management document had been distributed with the Agendas. This was largely unchanged from the previous year, but had been updated to include the risks of coronavirus transmission at meetings and in the Playing Field.

The Insurance Policy should also be reviewed annually before the independent examination and before it was due for renewal in June. The Parish Council were currently in a three-year binding agreement with Came & Co to provide our insurance cover and the Clerk had informed Came & Co that the old play equipment had been removed from the Playing Field and that the new equipment should be installed in April. This would result in an increase in our insurance premium when the new play equipment was handed over at the end of April

5044 – 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 zip wire from the Playing Field. This reduced the value of the Parish Council's Assets by £5,000 to £9,439. The Schedule of Assets would need to be updated once the new play equipment had been installed and the value of the Assets would then increase by £62,000.

5045 – Consultation on Unitary Council Bids for Somerset: The County Council had proposed the creation of a single unitary council for Somerset to the Government and in

response the four District Councils had proposed two unitary Councils – East Somerset and West Somerset, with East Somerset comprised the areas now covered by Mendip and South Somerset. Links to the business case for both proposals and to the Government’s consultation on both plans were sent to Councillors. The Government consultation was ending on April 19th. The District Councillor noted that the Secretary of State would make his decision on the proposals known by the summer. He was also concerned that individual rural Parish Councils would lose their voice under a large unitary authority. The Parish Council agreed to respond as a Council in support of the two unitary Council proposal as Taunton was felt to be too far away to make sensible decisions in relation to Batcombe. The Clerk to respond on behalf of the Council and individual Councillors to make their own response. **Action: The Clerk and Councillors.**

5046 - Authorisation of payment: Councillors authorised the following payments:

- £25.00 Suzy Hawkins – reimbursement of allotment rent.
- £1,077.44 The Clerk – Salary for 4th Quarter.
This included a small underpayment on last quarter.
- £123.03 The Clerk – Expenses for 4th Quarter. *See enclosed sheet.*

5047 – Other Business - Matters of Information Only: The Parish Council noted with sadness the death of Mike James. Mike was a Parish Councillor from 1987 to 2011 and Parish Council Chairman from 2002 to 2009.

The Clerk noted that the Government had not extended the legislation allowing Councils to meet online beyond May 7th. This meant that meetings after this date would have to be in person. As the Parish Council had no control over the numbers of members of the public attending, it was suggested that Councils do not meet until June 21st when all restrictions should be lifted. The Government recommended that the Council delegated their powers to the Clerk for this period. The Clerk noted that there would need to be an in-person meeting at the end of June to approve the Annual Return. Decisions on dates would be made at the May meeting.

5048 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 5th May 2021 at 7.30pm via Zoom. This would be the Annual Parish Council Meeting at which the Parish Council Chairman would be elected for the coming year.