

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

Tel: 01749 850934

e-mail: clerk@batcombe-parish-council-somerset.org.uk

You are Summoned to the Annual Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council to be held remotely via Zoom at 7.30pm on Wednesday 5th May 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. Election of Chairman & Chairman's Acceptance of Office

Mary Comley has indicated that she wishes to stand down as Parish Council Chairman. Mary remains the Chairman until a new one is elected and so chairs this item. The new Chairman then chairs the rest of the meeting. The Parish Council cannot do anything else until a Chairman is elected.

2. Election of Vice Chairman

The main role of the Vice Chairman is to chair meetings of the Parish Council when the Chairman is absent or has a pecuniary interest in an item.

3. Apologies and Acceptance of Reasons for Absence

4. Declarations of Interest

It is the Councillors' responsibility to declare any interests they may have in any item on the Agenda. If Councillors have a pecuniary (i.e. financial) interest in an item then they must leave the meeting for that item.

5. 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.*

6. Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 7th April 2021 to be agreed. *Attached. The Minutes will need to be signed later.*

7. Matters Arising – information updates only.

Sewage Treatment Plant at Ash Tree Cottages – work has begun on installing the new treatment plant.

Allotments – update on lease renewal.

8. District and County Councillors' Reports

An opportunity for the District and County Councillors to report on matters relevant to the parish, either in person or in writing.

9. Footpaths and Highways

Following another HGV getting stuck at the junction at the top of Holly Hill, two residents have requested a weight limit sign which they feel will be more effective in stopping HGV drivers than the current signs which are only advisory. I have pointed out that you cannot just erect a weight limit sign – the Parish Council would first have to apply to the County Council, requesting that they impose a Traffic Regulation Order that would impose a weight limit that could be enforced by the police.

In 2007 the Parish Council made enquiries about imposing a weight limit and the Senior Transport Planner at County Hall at the time (who was responsible for weight limits) informed the Parish Council that the County Council had standard procedures for assessing schemes for weight limits using a scorecard and felt that Batcombe would be very unlikely to score sufficiently to be implemented when compared to many other schemes being considered. The Parish Council could look into applying for a weight limit again, although I don't know if the County Council would look any more favourably on such an application this time.

10. Playground – New Play Equipment and Opening Celebration.

The new play equipment has been installed and by the time of the meeting the safety surfacing and turfing should be complete. Handover should take place once the post-installation safety inspection has taken place. With the removal of the site fencing the Playing Field and new play equipment will then be open for use. Additional turfing has been required – partly as a result of removing the old equipment and partly because mounds were installed for the cableway. The additional cost has been partly covered by the contingency and the equipment suppliers have met the rest of this cost. The new turf will need watering for some time unless we get some decent rain.

Completion was getting very close to the deadline for a first drawdown of funds from Viridor Credits, so the suppliers have provided an interim invoice for four pieces of equipment only (i.e. not for the basketball stand or the football goals or for the installation, safety surfacing or groundworks) and this has been sent to Viridor Credits along with photos of the new equipment. The Parish Council will need to pay the VAT on this invoice. A final invoice from Sutcliffe Play should be received once the handover has taken place. The Parish Council will need to pay the VAT on this invoice along with the difference between the grant and the cost of the new equipment which will be £3,358 if we get the full grant from Viridor Credits (this has been complicated by the fact that Viridor Credits have split the grant into separate elements based on the lowest quote we received).

Response to the new play equipment has been positive, but some concerns were raised about the colour of the multi-play equipment before the dark green roof was added. It has been noted that a non-standard colour would have significantly increased the cost and the delay would have put the funding at risk given the tight deadline for the first drawdown of funds. It should also be noted that the new equipment will gradually weather in.

At the last meeting we agreed to hold a celebration in the Playing Field on the Saturday afternoon of July 17th (Covid restrictions permitting). If we would like the children to enter a competition, we should put this in the June magazine. We also need to decide what else we will be doing.

11. Planning Applications

Planning Application No: 2021/0672/FUL

Retrospective permission for the change of use from agricultural to ancillary residential and the erection of three outbuildings.

Field House, Baileys Lane, Westcombe – Full Application

Field House is a recent barn conversion on Baileys Lane that under new Government legislation did not require planning permission and so was not considered by the Parish Council. However, retrospective planning permission is required for three outbuildings that have been erected. These consist of a carport and an ASHP (Air Source Heat Pump) enclosure in front of the Field House and a greenhouse a little further down Baileys Lane. 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 paper copies of the application, plans and associated documents.

Planning Application Updates. No updates to report. We have been told that a new application for a tennis court at Rockwells House has been submitted but we have not been notified of the application by the District Council yet.

12. Appointment of Staffing Committee

Our Standing Orders require the appointment of a Staffing Committee. This Committee would consider any complaints against or grievances by the Clerk. The Committee should consist of three Councillors so that any appeal could be considered by the remaining Councillors. (As relatives of the Clerk, Ian Sage and Jayne Cox should not be members of this committee.) SALC recommend that the Staff Committee or a representative from it should conduct an annual review with Clerk, although the pandemic means this has not been done this year.

13. Appointment of Village Hall and Heritage Room Representatives

The Council appoints a representative to the Village Hall Trust Committee. Currently this is Justin Witcombe. (Please note that the member appointed as Village Hall representative needs to declare this in Part 2 of the Register of Interests Declaration Form as a category (a) membership.)

The Council has appointed the Clerk as its representative to help run the Heritage Room. This appointment should be confirmed, unless a Councillor wishes to take on this role. There are three Trustees running the Heritage Room and the role involves a commitment to open the Heritage Room on a Saturday afternoon and assist those inquiring about the history of the parish and its former inhabitants.

14. Future Meetings:

Parish Council meetings cannot be held online after May 7th and all meetings after this date will need to be in person. As the Parish Council has no control over the number of members of the public attending, the Government recommend that Councils do not meet until June 21st when all restrictions on meetings should be lifted and that the Council delegate their powers to the Clerk for this period. The Parish Council needs to approve the Annual Return by the end of June so that it can be sent to the External Auditor, so I suggest hold a meeting on Wednesday 23rd of June and the July meeting a week later than usual on July 14th. The August meeting would only take place if required to consider planning applications.

The necessary resolutions to delegate powers to the Clerk are attached as a Business Continuity Motion, based on an example provided by Justin Robinson of SALC. Should any decisions need to be taken before June 23rd this would be done after consulting Councillors by e-mail or if felt appropriate an informal Zoom meeting. Should we need to make a decision on the application for a tennis court at Rockwells House, an informal Zoom meeting to advise the Clerk would be appropriate.

Traditionally the Parish Council has met on the first Wednesday of the month. Thus for 2021/2022, the suggested dates, to be confirmed at the meeting, are:

23 rd June	14 th July	4 th August	1 st September	6 th October	3 rd November
1 st December	5 th January	2 nd February	2 nd March	6 th April	4 th May

Wednesday April 6th would also be the date of the Annual Parish Meeting. The Council normally meets at 8.00pm in the summer and at 7.30pm for the rest of the year.

15. Arrangements for Review of Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Other Matters

Standing Orders require that the Council make arrangements at this meeting for the review of its Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Schedule of Assets, insurance cover, membership of other bodies, complaints procedure, procedures for handling requests made under the Freedom of Information Act, and policy for dealing with the press. I suggest the following timetable: Standing Orders to be reviewed at the February meeting; Financial Regulations to be reviewed at the October

meeting; and the Schedule of Assets, Risk Management Policy and insurance cover to be reviewed at the March meeting in time for the preparation of the Annual Report and renewal of the insurance. The Council's other policies were reviewed the year before the last election and, unless there are changes to the models on which they are based, I suggest these do not need to be reviewed until the year before the next Parish Council election in 2023.

16. Insurance Renewal

Details of the insurance premium are not yet available and will increase due to the insurance of the new play equipment. Renewal is due on June 1st and we are currently part way through a three-year long-term agreement.

17. Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31st March 2021

The bank reconciliation for the fourth quarter to 31st March needs to be verified by a Councillor before the meeting and reported to the Council.

A copy of the Financial Statements is attached. The three columns show the previous year's figures, the budget for last year (which was set in the January of the previous year) and the actual figures for last year. The VAT Refund was £9 less than budgeted and the allotments rent was £15 more than budgeted. The £910 raised for new play equipment had not been budgeted for – this consisted of £600 from the Cricket Club, a £100 donation and regular small donations through the Mendip Lottery. As a result, receipts were £932 more than budgeted.

The cost of the grass cutting was £60 less than the budgeted figure as there was no increase in the price per cut. The cost of the electricity supply was £10 less than budgeted as a result of entering into a new electricity contract the previous year. The cost of the water supply was £10 below budget as the supply was kept turned off as a result of the coronavirus restrictions. Maintenance consisted of £125 for the molecatcher and £110 for cutting back the hedge. Overall maintenance was £265 less than budgeted – partly because no play bark was purchased this year. The cost of the play equipment was the Contributing Third Party payment of £5,897.60 paid to Viridor Credits, which was a condition of their grant. As a result, overall Playing Field payments were £5,548 more than budgeted – although without the payment to Viridor Credits they would have been £349 less than budgeted.

The Clerk's salary was slightly more than budgeted as a result of a small increase in salary. The Clerk's expenses were less than budgeted. The cost of the Clerk's membership of SLCC was £12 more than budgeted as the increase in his salary placed him in the next salary band for membership fees. No training was undertaken as a result of the pandemic. Photocopying was slightly less than budgeted as Agendas were distributed by e-mail. Most other administration expenses were largely as budgeted and overall administration costs were £40 less than budgeted.

The grants given by the Council were as budgeted. The expenditure on the allotments was £220 for the lease of the field and £95 spent on hedge cutting, which meant that allotments maintenance was £55 less than budgeted. £200 had been budgeted for winter road maintenance but was not required. As a result of the above, total payments were £5,243 more than budgeted, although without the payment to Viridor Credits (which came from the money raised for the new play equipment), total payments would have been £644 less than budgeted.

Details of the earmarked money for the allotments and the play equipment are given in the attached accounts. At the end of the year there was £1,066 of earmarked allotments money of which £220 will pay for the lease of the field in May. At the beginning of the year there was £10,653 in the Parish Council accounts that had been raised for new play equipment. £5,897 of this money was used for the payment to Viridor Credits and a further £910 raised for the play equipment which meant that at the end of the year there was £5,666 earmarked for the new play equipment.

The net result of the variations against the budget given above is a deficit of £2,866 on the year instead of the budgeted surplus of £1,455. This is largely a result of the payment to Viridor Credits from the money raised for new play equipment and the additional money raised for the play

equipment. At the end of the year the Parish Council had £18,666 in its funds, £10,690 more than anticipated in the budget. This is a result of money raised for the new play equipment and money budgeted for play equipment repairs in previous years that had not been spent. Of this £18,666 in funds at the end of the year, £1,066 is set aside for the allotments, £5,666 for new play equipment and £77 for notice boards. This means that the Parish Council has funds totalling £11,857 that are not earmarked for specific items, (although it is envisaged that the £4,000 that had been intended for play equipment repairs will go towards the cost of the new play equipment). This leaves the Parish Council with effective reserves of £7,857 which should be sufficient to cover any unforeseen contingency and a contested by-election and is more than the maximum reserve recommended by SALC of two-thirds of the precept.

Our internal auditor has confirmed his willingness to undertake the audit and complete it by our meeting on June 23rd.

18. Update on Budget for Year Ending 31st March 2022

Enclosed is an updated projection on this year's budget. The first column shows the actual figures for last year. The second column shows the budget for this year as agreed in January. The third column is the updated projection for this year. We have not yet had confirmation that this year's precept of £9,925 has been received. The VAT repayment includes the VAT of £12,466.80 on the new play equipment which was not included in the budget. Normally we only make a VAT claim once a year but with large amounts to claim can do so more frequently. If all allotments continue to be rented the allotments rent will be £25 less than budgeted because of the rent refund from last year. There should be a small continuing income for the play equipment from the Mendip Lottery.

With regard to payments, the amount for the new play equipment is the VAT (to be reclaimed) plus the difference between the grant and the cost of the new equipment which is £3,358. The Clerk's salary will be £25 more than budgeted because of a small underpayment last year. The level of the Zoom subscription will depend on how long we keep the subscription going. The insurance premium will increase because of the insurance of the new play equipment but we don't know by how much yet. Photocopying will be reduced as no paper Agendas and Minutes were distributed to Councillors over the last year.

The projection shows a deficit of £1,510 on the year, as a result of spending money raised for the play equipment. This gives funds of £17,156 at the end of the year of which £1,020 will be earmarked for the allotments, £77 for notice boards and £2,308 for the Playing Field improvements. This will leave £13,751 of funds which aren't earmarked of which £4,000 is intended for the Playing Field.

19. Authorisation of Payment

Sutcliffe Play (South West) Limited - £7,218.60 – VAT on interim play equipment invoice.

Came & Co - £????.00 – Insurance premium. (Invoice not yet received)

T & E A Hollis - £220.00 – Rent of Allotments Field.

Dominic Conway - £80.00 – Grass cutting in March.

20. Other Business – matters of information only.

Please note that the Parish Council cannot make decisions on items that do not appear on the Agenda – so matters raised under this item are for information only.

21. Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 23rd June 2020 at 8.00pm in the Jubilee Hall.

Rob Sage