

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

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Minutes of a Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 6th April 2022 in the Jubilee Hall, Batcombe, commencing at 8.30pm.

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

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage and twenty members of the public.

5200 – Apologies for Absence and Acceptance of Reasons for Absence: David Stevens and Justin Witcombe. Also, Michael Gay – District Councillor, Peter Sheldon and James Palmer. In the absence of the Chairman, the meeting was chaired by the Vice Chair, Janet Jones.

5201 – Declarations of Interest: Ian Sage and Jayne Cox declared interests in the items on the Clerk’s salary as relatives of the Clerk; in the planning application for Stonecot as relatives of the applicant; and in the item on the Village Hall’s premises licence as Jayne was the Parish Council’s representative on the Village Hall Trust.

5202 – Public Participation: None.

5203 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 2nd March 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Vice Chair.

5204 – Matters Arising: Parish Council Election – it was noted that there would be a contested election as eight people had been nominated for the seven seats on the Council. The Clerk read out the list of those standing for election.

Facebook Page – the Clerk stated that there was no reason why the Parish Council should not set up a Facebook page, but advised the Council to amend its Social Media Policy, setting out similar guidelines to those already in place for the Parish Council website on what can and cannot be posted on the page. The Parish Council would also need to decide who was authorised to post on the page and it was agreed to consider this after the election.

5205 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report: The Working Party had met in the Playing Field to consider additional seating and had made several recommendations. After some discussion, it was agreed to purchase a “GWR” bench (similar to the one in the West End of Bruton) to go by the vehicle entrance to the Playing Field with a concrete base. The low bench currently by the entrance would be moved to the bottom corner of the field. It was also agreed to make a simple bench seat in the bus shelter from scaffolding poles and thick board – at an estimated cost of £170.

One of the trees in the Playing Field had been damaged in Storm Eunice with a large section of tree being held in a fork at the top of the tree. Bruton Tree Care had provided an estimate of £550 + VAT for removing the section of tree and thinning the tree by 25%. It was suggested that a second quote be obtained.

A parent had expressed a concern that a child could become entangled in the goal netting of the goal nearest the cableway. The netting had since been pegged down with heavy duty pegs that could not be removed easily.

The netting, mat and stumps had been delivered by Net World Sports, although it took four attempts by Hermes to deliver the adhesive. Net World Sports delivered the equipment with a 30-day invoice for the Parish Council to pay. The netting, mat and stumps had been installed by Ian Sage, Peter Glaisher and Peter's son Jamie and these three were thanked for doing this. The Clerk was asked to provide a good review for Net World Sports on Trustpilot.

The water for the water fountain in the Playing Field had been turned on after the winter. Someone had turned it off again but it was then turned back on.

Clare Kingston reported that she had been given eight hazelnut bushes to fill the gaps in the Playing Field hedge. They would need plastic tubing to protect them. It was agreed to plant the bushes as soon as possible during the Easter holidays and to ask children to help plant them.

The Clerk reported that Fete Committee were no longer part of the Parochial Church Council which meant that the Fete would not be covered by the PCC's insurance. The Committee had promised that this would be overcome either by a member of the PCC joining the Fete Committee or by the Fete Committee obtaining its own insurance. The Parish Council would need confirmation of the insurance before the Fete could take place in the Playing Field.

5206 – Planning Applications:

Planning Application No: 2022/0375/HSE – Creation of driveway, hardstanding, turning and parking area. Stonecot, Batcombe – Householder Application. Ian Sage and Jayne Cox left the room while this application was considered. The applicant answered a number of questions from Councillors and it was noted that Somerset Highways would be consulted about the new access if planning permission was granted. The Parish Council decided to recommend approval as the off-road parking would be an improvement on a narrow road with known difficulties passing parked cars. The new entrance would also provide safer access to the property for the applicants' young children and the neighbours were supportive of the application.

Planning Application Nos: 2022/0413/HSE & 2022/0629/LBC – Alterations to main house, conversion of barn and dairy to ancillary accommodation, demolition of cottage and works to remaining outbuildings. Lodge Farm, Lodge Farm Lane, Batcombe – Householder Application and Listed Building Consent. The applicant had hoped to attend the meeting but had been caught in traffic – however, some of the Parish Councillors had been able to make a site visit and toured the house and buildings. The Parish Council decided to recommend approval of both applications as there were no issues with the proposed alterations. The applicants had put considerable thought into the proposed works and had consulted with and listened to the advice of the Conservation Officer.

Planning Application No: 2022/0472/TCA – Ash (T1) – Fell. Batcombe House, Gold Hill, Batcombe – Works/Felling Trees in a Conservation Area. The Ash tree was in the hedge on the lane to Home Farm and was damaged in Storm Eunice, losing a major limb that had compromised the integrity of the tree. The Parish Council recommended approval as there were no objections to the felling of a seriously damaged tree.

Planning Application Updates: The tree works at Little Court – felling a Sycamore and reducing a Yew – had been approved.

5207 – Premises Licence Application by the Village Hall Trust: The Village Hall Trust had submitted an application for a new Premises Licence, which would cover the whole site inside and outside instead of just the Jubilee Hall and would extend the hours of the various licensable activities. The Vice Chair read the details of the extensions to the hours and the

Clerk explained that the Parish Council had until April 22nd if it wished to make a representation regarding the application.

David Cartwright from the Village Hall Trust explained that the Trust had received grants from the District Council which it had used to upgrade the Old School. While The Three Horseshoes was closed the Village Hall Trust had been running a bar in the Jubilee Hall on Saturday evenings and Sunday lunchtimes and felt that the Old School would offer a more convivial atmosphere for a bar. As a result, the Trust had applied to extend the Premises Licence to the Old School and the District Council had then suggested applying for a new Premises Licence with extended hours instead which could be used as and when needed.

Several of the neighbours of the Village Hall then expressed their concerns about the proposals to extend the hours of the licensable activities and in particular that amplified music could be played outside the buildings every night of the summer. The neighbours had no concerns about the Premises Licence being extended to the Old School, but felt the extended hours could result in more late-night events in the future.

As a result of the concerns raised, the Village Hall Chairman, Sheena Pool, stated that she would go back to the Committee with a recommendation that the application be withdrawn and a new application to extend the current Premises Licence to the Old School be submitted. The Parish Council agreed that if the application was withdrawn no representation would be made but if this had not happened before the deadline a representation expressing the concerns of the neighbours would be made. **Action: The Clerk.**

5208 – Clerk’s Salary for 2021/22: Under the Clerk’s Contract of Employment, the Clerk’s salary was determined by the National Joint Council for Local Government Services pay scales and the rates from 1st April 2021 had finally been agreed with a 1.75% pay increase. This resulted in the Clerk’s hourly salary increasing from £11.53 an hour to £11.73 an hour, backdated to April 2021. The increase was agreed by the Parish Council.

5209 - Authorisation of Payments: Councillors authorised the following payments:

£160.00 Kevin Gale – Grass cutting in the Playing Field (two cuts in March).

£1,218.93 The Clerk – Salary and expenses for 4th Quarter.

£823.90 Net World Sports – Cricket netting, mat and stumps.

5210 – Other Business – matters of information only:

Highways – Mary Comley had spoken to Somerset Highways and Hincombe Hill was due to be repaired in April. The Area Superintendent would also be looking into the blocked gulleys in the parish. And the Honeycliff Bridleway would be repaired by Somerset Highways.

Field by the Telephone Exchange – Concerns were raised over the addition of a yurt, a greenhouse and hard standing to the field and whether planning permission was required for any of these.

Queen’s Platinum Jubilee – It was noted that a “street party” would take place in the Village Hall carpark on Saturday June 4th with a hog roast. There was some disappointment that an actual street party was not being organised.

5211 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 11th May 2022 at 7.30pm in the Jubilee Hall. This would be the Annual Parish Council Meeting at which the Parish Council Chairman would be elected for the year.

Janet Jones

11/5/22