

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

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Minutes of a Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 1st September 2021 in the Jubilee Hall, Batcombe, commencing at 8.00pm.

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

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage and one member of the public.

5092 – Apologies for Absence and Acceptance of Reasons for Absence: David Stevens and Justin Witcombe. In the absence of the Chairman, the meeting was chaired by the Vice Chairman.

5093 – Declarations of Interest: None.

5094 – Public Participation: None.

5095 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 21st July 2021 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Vice Chairman.

5096 – Matters Arising: Allotments – The Clerk noted that the new lease for the allotments field still needed to be signed by the owners.

Farmfest – There were no reported noise issues in the relation to the Farmfest music festival, although Jayne Cox noted that the laser display was an issue for nearby animals.

5097 – District and County Councillors’ Reports: Written reports had been received from the County Councillor for July and August and distributed to Parish Councillors.

5098 – Footpaths and Highways: Kale Street had been closed on August 31st to allow BT Openreach to undertake cabling works. Concern was raised about a “water feature” on Kale Street that would apparently require traffic lights for work to be undertaken to resolve the issue because there were no speed restrictions on Kale Street. It was noted that the County Council’s Traffic Engineer has spoken to the Chairman regarding the application for a weight limit to alleviate the issues with HGVs on Holly Hill before the last meeting and had been positive about the chances of obtaining one.

5099 – Playing Field: The Opening Celebration was considered to be a success despite the wet weather meaning the music and picnic had to be moved to the Jubilee Hall. The Parish Council Chairman had since met with a representative of Viridor Credits who was making a formal check that the Parish Council had done all that it had applied for a grant for.

The plaque acknowledging those who had contributed towards the new play equipment had been damaged. It was decided to leave the plaque as it was for the time being and review this decision at the December meeting.

A quote had been received from Kevin Gale of Wanstrow to cut the Playing Field grass for the remainder of the season and, as this was the same price as charged by Dominic Conway, the quote was accepted. The Clerk reported that Kevin Gale had sent him a copy of his public liability insurance. Mr Gale to be asked to close the Playing Field while cutting the grass to reduce the likelihood of accidents.

Gary Butler had cut the inside of the Playing Field hedge. The Clerk reported that the latest water bill showed that 2,680 gallons of water had been used in the Playing Field in the previous six months – this was assumed to be a result of watering the new turf around the play equipment.

The company supplying the new gate for the Playing Field had made a mistake on their invoice and so an additional cheque was required to cover the VAT on the gate (which could be reclaimed). Ian Sage would source the new mat, nets and stumps for the cricket net once harvesting was complete. The Clerk noted that there was £1,423 left of the money raised for the Playing Field improvements plus the £4,000 of its own money that the Parish Council had put aside for this purpose.

The Clerk noted that he had not been able to apply for the planning permission required for the tree works behind the cricket because of pressure of work and it was agreed to pay the tree surgeon the £25 fee he charged to apply for the required permission.

5100 – Planning Applications: Planning Application No: 2021/1431/FUL - Erection of first storey extension, erection of annex to form staff accommodation and erection of store room The Three Horseshoes, Batcombe – Full Application. Concerns were raised about the internal alterations including the loss of the fireplace and the fact that the male toilets would be outside – but it was noted that the building was not listed and so internal alterations did not require planning permission. There were no concerns with the first storey extension or the erection of the annex for staff accommodation and so the Parish Council decided to recommend approval.

Planning Application No: 2021/1848/LBC - Internal and external alterations to include fenestration, demolition of external modern boiler house South View, Kale Street, Batcombe – Listed Building Consent. There was a concern about the metal flue replacing the chimney but as this was at the rear of the property the Parish Council decided to recommend approval.

Planning Application Updates.

The application for extensions to and refurbishment of Greenacres on Baileys Lane had been approved by Mendip District Council. The case officer's report stated that the application had been referred to the Ward Member because the officer recommendation for approval was contrary to that of the Parish Council, but as no response was received the application was approved as per the officer's recommendation.

The District Council had no objection to the felling of the Bay tree at Church View.

The application for the erection of an agricultural barn and stables at Carrot Hill Farmhouse had been approved by the District Council despite the Parish Council's recommendation of refusal. Concerns were raised that the District Councillor's comments on the application had apparently not been received by the case officer and at the precedent this planning permission set for the extension of domestic curtilage onto agricultural land. A letter to be written to the planning department at the District Council after hearing from the District Councillor as to what had happened.

5101 – Unitary Authority and Parish Council Elections: The Clerk reported that the County Council and One Somerset had asked SALC to consult with parish councils as to whether they would like the next parish council elections to take place in May 2022 - when costs would be shared with elections to the new unitary authority - or in May 2023 - when they are due to take place. As there would be no District Council elections in 2023, parish councils would have to bear the full cost of a contested election which for Batcombe could be several thousand pounds. The Parish Council decided to recommend that elections be held in May 2022. **Action: The Clerk.**

5102 – Bank Reconciliation and Budget Update: Janet Jones checked the quarterly bank reconciliation.

An updated projection on the current year's budget had been distributed with the Agenda. The precept of £9,925 had been received as had the VAT claim for £76.57 for VAT paid in the previous year. A claim for the VAT on the new play equipment would be made shortly. The allotments rent would be £350 if all the allotments remained occupied. £31 had been received from the Mendip Lottery for the play equipment and interest would be minimal. Receipts would be approximately £12,500 more than budgeted because of the VAT to be reclaimed on the new play equipment, which had not been included in the budget.

The projection for the Playing Field expenditure was roughly £16,500 more than budgeted, due to the money spent on the new play equipment and the cost of the new gate that was not included in the budget. This was mainly the VAT that would be reclaimed. Grass cutting was likely to be a little less than budgeted (depending on the number of cuts required later in the year). Maintenance was likely to be less than budgeted as the new play equipment should not need any work.

The projection for the expenditure on Administration was likely to be £100 more than the budgeted figure. While the Clerk's expenses and photocopying costs were likely to be less than budgeted, the cost of the Zoom subscription had not been budgeted and the insurance premium was larger than budgeted because of the new play equipment being insured. The Parish Council decided not to continue with the Zoom subscription. The projection for the expenditure on Grants and Other Items were likely to be as budgeted.

Overall, there was a projected deficit of £2,300 compared to a budgeted surplus of £1,915. This was due to the net expenditure on the play equipment after the VAT is reclaimed and the cost of the new gate. However, the projected funds at the end of the year were £16,350 – around £5,000 better than expected when the budget was made. It should be noted that approximately £1,000 of this figure would be earmarked for the allotments

5103 – Annual Grants from the Parish Council: It was agreed to provide the budgeted grants of £300 to the Village Hall (to pay for the Parish Council's own meetings and for the committee meetings of other village organisations) and £200 to the Parochial Church Council for the maintenance of the churchyard. It was also agreed to give, as in previous years, two grants of £100 to Mendip Community Transport - under the section 137 power - and to the Mendip Citizen's Advice Bureau.

5104 - Authorisation of Payments: Councillors authorised the following payments in addition to the above grants:

£37.00	Mary Comley – Opening Celebration expenses.
£150.00	Frank Harrington – Live music at Opening Celebration.
£120.00	Gary Butler – Grass cutting before Opening Celebration.
£110.00	Gary Butler – Hedge cutting in Playing Field.
£41.58	water2business – Water supply to Playing Field.
£164.24	D & I Bridgeman and Son Ltd – VAT on new Playing Field gate.
£821.19	D & I Bridgeman and Son Ltd – New Playing Field gate (<i>retrospective</i>).
£80.00	Kevin Gale – Grass cutting in August.
£80.00	Dominic Conway – Grass cutting in July.

5105 – Other Business: Peter Glaisher reported that a tree at the top of Westcombe had been killed by the road salt placed under it and that the tree on the triangle at the top of Mill Lane had died.

It was reported that someone wished to plant a tree in memory of Dominic Conway. It was suggested that a bench in the Playing Field would be a more suitable memorial and that the donor could pay for the plaque if the cost of a bench was too much.

The Clerk was asked to place a notice in the parish magazine reminding people that they needed to ask permission to hold events in the Playing Field or to erect items such as a bouncy castle or barbecue. **Action: The Clerk.**

Ian Sage noted that the new gate for the Playing Field might be yellow – although he had ordered a green one.

It was reported that someone had painted marks on the road in front of the Church – and Mary Comley noted that this was illegal.

5106 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 6th October 2021 at 8.00pm in the Jubilee Hall.

D J Stevens

3/11/21