

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

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You are Summoned to the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council to be held on Wednesday 1st December 2021 at 7.30pm in the Jubilee Hall, Batcombe

*Please note that seating will be well spaced.
The wearing of face masks is optional but recommended.*

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. Apologies and Acceptance of Reasons for Absence

2. Declarations of Interest

It is the Councillors' responsibility to declare any interests they may have in any item on the Agenda. If you are uncertain, please ask the Clerk before the meeting.

3. 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.*

4. Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 3rd November 2021 to be agreed and signed.
Enclosed/attached.

5. Matters Arising – information updates only.
Nothing that does not appear on the Agenda below.

6. 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.

7. Allotments

Six of the allotment holders have e-mailed to say that they have paid their rent by bank transfer. I have not yet heard from the remaining allotment holder who rents two allotments. No interest has yet been expressed in the two vacant allotments. I have asked Gary Butler to cut the allotments field hedge and I have reminded the allotment holders of their responsibility to maintain the general areas of the allotment field.

The allotment field owner will be at the meeting and would like to discuss the future of the allotments. She is concerned about the rubbish in the field that has not been removed – in particular a length of guttering that has appeared in the hedge – and the generally overgrown appearance of the allotments.

8. The Queen's Platinum Jubilee

The Queen's Platinum Jubilee will be celebrated on the weekend of June 2nd to 5th 2022 with Thursday 2nd and Friday June 3rd being bank holidays. I am not aware of any plans yet for a celebration in the parish but the Parish Council has been sent a letter inviting us to take part in a mass lighting of beacons on the evening of June 2nd. At the last two Jubilees the Parish Council has organised the lighting of a beacon on Burnell with the permission and co-operation of the owners. The plan is for beacons across the country to be lit at 9.15pm. We would also register our beacon on a website set up for that purpose.

9. Footpaths and Highways

A local resident has raised a concern about the speeds a small minority of drivers drive at through the parish, particularly on roads with blind bends. A short piece asking drivers to drive with due consideration for other road users was included in the parish magazine.

10. Playground – Maintenance Report

The plaque acknowledging those who had contributed towards the new play equipment had been damaged in the summer. At the Council's September meeting it was agreed to leave the plaque as it was and to review this decision at this meeting.

At the last meeting consideration of installing a bench in the Playing Field in memory of Dominic Conway was deferred to this meeting. A standard teak bench (similar to those installed in the churchyard to commemorate the Queen's Silver and Golden Jubilees) would cost around £500. There are cheaper versions available, but are not likely to be as long lasting. Engraving or a plaque would be extra.

The tree surgeon will be applying for planning permission for the tree work on the trees overhanging the cricket net and the tree in the corner of the Playing Field.

The new gate for the Playing Field has been delivered and just needs to be installed.

11. Planning Applications:

Planning Application No: 2021/2467/HSE - Alterations to garage to accommodate PV panels
Eastcombe Cottage, Eastcombe Lane, Batcombe – Householder Application

The proposal is to build up what is currently a roof with a slight slope so that it is flat and add eight PV panels to the roof. Also to replace the existing garage door with a new roller door and add a new pedestrian door. Full details of the application can be found on the Mendip planning website at <https://publicaccess.mendip.gov.uk/online-applications/> by entering the planning application number into the search engine. The applicant will be present at the meeting to answer any questions.

Planning Application No: 2021/2377/FUL -

Cladding of building on all sides, installation of concrete pad and improvements to trackway
Land at 367699 137338, Copplesbury Lane, Batcombe – Full Application

The barn is in the field on the opposite side of the lane to the track to Higher Greenscombe. The barn is currently open-sided and used for storing hay. The proposal is to clad the sides and install a concrete pad so that it can be used to house cattle that need to be TB quarantined. The track to the barn will also be improved to allow winter access. Planning permission is required because there is a dwelling (Carrot Hill Farmhouse) within 400m of a building that will be used to house livestock. Full details of the application can be found on the Mendip planning website at <https://publicaccess.mendip.gov.uk/online-applications/> by entering the planning application number into the search engine.

Planning Application Updates.

We have been notified by the County Council that the appeals for 3275971/3275972 - Bartlett's Quarry have been withdrawn and no further action will be taken.

12. Adoption of Updated Financial Regulations

Attached is a copy of updated Financial Regulations for the Parish Council that have been adapted from a model produced by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). I have removed from the model regulations references to committees as we have no committee with its own budget, and optional regulations relating to construction work (which we are unlikely to undertake) and to stores and equipment and charities (which are not relevant for our Council).

The main changes to the current Financial Regulations relate to banking and the use of BACS and internet banking. While we currently do not have the facility to undertake either it may be an option in the future. The other change is the length of the Financial Regulations which has increased from six pages to sixteen.

There are a small number of regulations that may cause some practical issues and I recommend these are either removed or or suspended. These are as follows:

Regulation 4.4 calls for a separate salary budget to be reviewed annually and a hard copy signed by the Clerk and Chairman. This seems unnecessary for a Council with only one employee when his salary is reviewed as part of the annual budgeting process [Regulation 3.1] Regulation 4.4 would be relevant to large councils with multiple employees whose individual salaries are not made public.

Regulation 5.8 requires any grants made by the Council to be approved by a committee set up for this purpose. As we provided a limited number of grants decided upon by the full Council this would be unnecessary.

There is a slight anomaly between Regulations 6.21 and 6.20. Regulation 6.21 allows the Clerk to make small purchases (such as stamps) in cash which is then refunded. Regulation 6.20 prevents the Clerk from using a debit card for such a purchase. Given the increasing use of debit cards for small purchases I suggest the words "or debit cards" are removed from Regulation 6.20.

Regulation 7.4 calls for a separate confidential cash book to be kept for all payments to employees which is not accessible to the public. The idea is that salary payments are then aggregated in the Council's accounts so that individual salaries are not revealed. As this would be ineffective with only one employee, I recommend that this regulation is suspended.

In addition Regulations 1.14 and 4.1 have a suggested figure of £5,000 for the level at which the full Council should authorise expenditure. I suggest that this figure is changed to £250. Below this figure expenditure can be authorised by the Chairman and the Clerk but in practice all expenditure is authorised by the full Council.

If Councillors are happy with these amendments the new Financial Regulations should be adopted by a resolution.

13. Budget and Precept for Year Ending 31st March 2023

A budget for the year ending 31st March 2023 was enclosed with last month's Agenda. See last month's Agenda notes for details of the budget. The only change since the last meeting is to note that the claim for the VAT on the new play equipment has been paid by HMRC.

Thoughts for the Future

This is an opportunity for Councillors to consider what future activities the Parish Council might undertake and what implications these might have for the budget and the level of precept required. A previous Chairman was very keen on a five year plan for the Council – does the present Council want to consider something similar?

A decision on the level of the precept for 2022/23 does not have to be made at this meeting - and can be deferred until the January meeting when we should have details of the tax base for 2022/23 so that we will know the impact of the precept on people's Council Tax.

14. Authorisation of Payments

£160.00 Kevin Gale – Grass cutting in Playing Field in November.

15. Other Business – matters of information only.

Nothing at present.

16. Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 5th January 2022 at 7.30pm in the Jubilee Hall.

Rob Sage

Rob Sage – Clerk

24th November 2021