

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

Tel: 01749 850934

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

Minutes of a Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 1st December 2021 in the Jubilee Hall, Batcombe, commencing at 7.30pm.

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

Also Present: Four members of the public.

5138 – Apologies for Absence and Acceptance of Reasons for Absence: Justin Witcombe and the District Councillor – Michael Gay who was at a District Council meeting.

5139 – Declarations of Interest: None.

5140 – Public Participation: None.

5141 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 3rd November 2021 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5142 – Matters Arising: None.

5143– District and County Councillors’ Reports: Written reports had been received from the District and County Councillors and distributed to Parish Councillors.

It was noted that the election of a shadow unitary council would take place in May 2022 and that Parish Council elections would take place at the same time, a year earlier than usual.

5144 – Allotments: The Clerk reported that six of the allotment holders had e-mailed to say that they had paid their rent by bank transfer. This left one allotment holder who rented two allotments. No interest had been expressed in the two vacant allotments. Gary Butler had been asked to cut the allotments field hedge and the allotment holders had been reminded of their responsibility to maintain the general areas of the allotment field.

The allotment field owner stated that they were happy to continue renting the field for the allotments but were concerned about the rubbish in the field that had not been removed and the generally untidy and poorly maintained appearance of the allotments. She felt that the allotment holders were not meeting their obligations under their tenancy agreement and asked who was going to ensure that they did so.

It was agreed that someone should take responsibility and Justin Witcombe was suggested as an allotment holder. Ian Sage volunteered to take away the accumulated rubbish and the Clerk to write to the allotment holders reminding them of their responsibilities, noting that the Parish Council had cleared the rubbish on their behalf and that if they did not keep the allotments in good order there was a risk that the lease would not be renewed in future.
Action: Ian Sage and The Clerk. On the basis on this action the allotment field owner signed the lease for the next five years.

5145 – Planning Applications:

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

application was brought forward on the Agenda as the applicant was present. There were no objections to the proposed alterations and the Parish Council agreed to recommend approval.

5146 – The Queen’s Platinum Jubilee: The Queen’s Platinum Jubilee would be celebrated on the weekend of June 2nd to 5th 2022 with Thursday June 2nd and Friday June 3rd being bank holidays. The Parish Council had been invited to take part in a mass lighting of beacons on the evening of June 2nd, with beacons being lit across the country at 9.15pm. At previous Jubilees the Parish Council had organised the lighting of a beacon on Burnell with the permission and co-operation of the owners. It was agreed to do so again if the owners were happy and Ian Sage volunteered to speak to the owners. **Action: Ian Sage.** Other celebrations such as a street party may be organised in the parish.

5147 – Footpaths and Highways: A local resident had 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 had been included in the latest parish magazine. Various concerns were raised about the standard of driving in the parish.

5148 – Playing Field: A decision on the plaque in the Playing Field acknowledging those who had contributed towards the new play equipment that had been damaged had been deferred to this meeting. A request that the plaque be replaced had been received from one of the donors named on the plaque and it was agreed that the plaque should be replaced. However, the Council was divided over whether the plaque should be edited or replaced by an identical plaque and it was agreed to defer a decision to the March meeting when it was hoped the appropriate course of action would be clearer.

A resident raised a concern over bits of hedge that had been blown onto the roundabout when the Playing Field hedge was cut and asked if the hedge cutter could notify the Council when the hedge cutting would be done. It was noted that the hedge cutter cut the Playing Field hedge for free, for which the Parish Council was very grateful, and tended to cut the hedge when he was passing with time available to do it.

The installation of the new gate had been postponed for the time being and discussion of a new bench was deferred to a later meeting after consideration of an appropriate location.

Ian Sage reported that the moles were back in the Playing Field and volunteered to turn off the water now that the weather had turned colder. **Action: Ian Sage.**

The planning application for the tree works on the trees overhanging the cricket net and tree in the corner of the Playing Field had been made (see next item).

5149 – Planning Applications:

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 was in the field on the opposite side of the lane to the track to Higher Greenscombe and was currently open-sided and used for storing hay. The proposal was to clad the sides and install a concrete pad so that it could be used to house cattle that need to be TB quarantined. The track to the barn would also be improved to allow winter access. Planning permission was required because there was a dwelling (Carrot Hill Farmhouse) within 400m of a building that would be used to house livestock. The Clerk noted that a resident of Carrot Hill Farmhouse had complained that they had not been informed of the application by the District Council. As there were no objections to the proposals, the Parish Council agreed to recommend approval.

Planning Application No: 2021/2619/TCA – T1 Oak: prune lateral spread by up to 2m; G1 – 2 x Oak trees: crown raise to 1.5m – Playing Field, Batcombe – Works/Felling Trees in a CA. This was the Parish Council’s application to crown lift the trees above the cricket net and stabilise the Oak tree in the corner of the Playing Field. The Parish Council agreed to recommend approval.

Planning Application Updates: The Parish Council had been notified by the County Council that the appeals for 3275971/3275972 - Bartlett's Quarry had been withdrawn and no further action would be taken.

5150 – Adoption of Updated Financial Regulations: Copies of updated Financial Regulations for the Parish Council, adapted from a model produced by the National Association of Local Councils, had been distributed with the Agenda. The Clerk noted that the model regulations had been amended to remove references to committees (as the Parish Council had no committee with its own budget) and optional regulations relating to construction work, to stores and equipment and to charities (which were not relevant for the Parish Council). He also noted that the main changes to the current Financial Regulations related to banking and the use of BACS.

The Parish Council agreed to suspend a small number of regulations that were not practical for a small parish council with only one employee. These were: Regulation 4.4 which calls for a separate salary budget to be reviewed annually and a hard copy signed by the Clerk and Chairman; Regulation 5.8 which requires any grants made by the Council to be approved by a committee set up for this purpose (as grants are decided upon by the full Council); and Regulation 7.4 which calls for a separate confidential cash book to be kept for all payments to employees which is not accessible to the public to prevent individual salaries being made public.

In addition, it was agreed to amend Regulation 6.20 removing the words “or debit cards” (which would allow the Clerk to make small purchases with his debit card and then be refunded); and Regulations 1.14 and 4.1 replacing the suggested figure of £5,000 for the level at which the full Council should authorise expenditure with £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).

The amended Financial Regulations were adopted by the Parish Council.

5151 – Budget and Precept for Year Ending 31st March 2023: The Clerk reported that the VAT claim for the VAT on the new play equipment had been paid by HMRC.

Thoughts for the future: Suggestions were made for a new notice board for Westcombe and to consider the upgrading of footpaths. However, given the uncertainty with the new unitary council replacing the current councils it was felt that this was not the time to make decisions on additional expenditure.

A final decision on the budget and precept was deferred to the January meeting when the tax base for Batcombe would be known but a decision in principle to leave the precept unchanged was made in case bad weather delayed the January meeting.

5152 - Authorisation of Payments: Councillors authorised the following payment:

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

The Clerk reported that a payment of £35 had been made by Direct Debit to the Information Commissioner’s Office in November for the Parish Council’s Data Protection Registration and that a Direct Debit payment of £25.62 would be taken in December for the electricity supply to the Playing Field.

5153 – Other Business – matters of information only:

Highways & Footpaths – Mary Comley reported that she had e-mailed Charlie Higgins at Somerset Highways suggesting that sandbags be placed by the landslip on Hincombe Hill to prevent water erosion and this had been done. The Honeycliff bridleway was closed as the drain had collapsed. Mary noted that the MBBA were planning to remove vegetation and it was hoped that the County Council's Right of Way team would sort the surface allowing it to be used by walkers.

Playing Field – A request had been received from Viridor Credits for a report with pictures on the grant application for the new play equipment to be used as a case study on their website.

Action: The Clerk.

Christmas Tree Festival – Mary Comley reported that her grandchildren would help with the decoration of the Parish Council Christmas tree for the Festival. A theme for the tree had been requested and "Memories of Christmas Past" was agreed.

Coney Wood – Ian Sage reported that a surveyor had been assessing the trees in Coney Wood and that a lot of these would need to be felled in the Spring. It was felt to be fortunate that the Parish Council had not taken on responsibility for the Wood.

5154 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 5th January 2022 at 7.30pm in the Jubilee Hall.

D J Stevens

5/1/22