

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 5th January 2022 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: The Clerk – Rob Sage and one member of the public.

5155 – Apologies for Absence and Acceptance of Reasons for Absence: The District Councillor – Michael Gay – gave his apologies as he was unable to drive at night. It was noted that Justin Witcombe had not given his apologies and that if he was absent for six months without his reason for absence being accepted by the Council, he would no longer be a member of the Council.

5156 – Declarations of Interest: Ian Sage and Jayne Cox declared an interest in the authorisation of the Clerk's salary and expenses as relatives of the Clerk.

5157 – Public Participation: None.

5158 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 1st December 2021 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5159 – Matters Arising: The Queen's Platinum Jubilee – The owners of Burnell were happy for the beacon to be lit there – it was just a case of finding the cage used to hold the beacon.

Christmas Tree Festival – Mary Comley was thanked for decorating the Parish Council's entry in the Christmas Tree Festival in the Church.

5160– District and County Councillors' Reports: A written report had been received from the County Councillor and distributed to Parish Councillors. A written report had been received from the District Councillor shortly before the meeting and would be distributed to Parish Councillors after the meeting.

5161 – Allotments: Ian Sage was thanked for removing a considerable amount of rubbish from the communal areas of the allotments field and the allotment holders had been reminded of the need to keep their allotments in good order. Justin Witcombe was unwilling to act as the liaison with the allotment holders and so Peter Glaisher volunteered to take on this role.

It was noted that the rent on two allotments had not been paid and so there were definitely two and possible four vacant allotments and the Parish Council would have to consider how to keep these vacant allotments clear of weeds and tidy. It was suggested that the vacant allotments be advertised on Facebook on the Batcombe, Upton Noble and Evercreech pages.

5162 – Footpaths and Highways: Upton Noble School had hired large coaches to bring children down to their carol service in Batcombe Church and these had great difficulty in getting around the corner at Conduit Cottage and damaged a lamp on the cottage. The owner of the cottage asked if the sign at the junction off the A359 could be upgraded to something legally enforceable. The Chairman to follow up progress on obtaining a legally enforceable weight limit with Somerset Highways. **Action: The Chairman.**

Jayne Cox reported that she had spoken to the owners of Longleat Cottage about the state of Fry's Lane and work had been undertaken to restore the lane to its original condition to the satisfaction of all concerned.

5163 – Playing Field: The water in the Playing Field had been turned off for the winter and Ian Sage was thanked for draining the pipes in the bus shelter. No more molehills had appeared in the Playing Field apart from some alongside the cricket net.

Kevin Gale had provided a quote for cutting the Playing Field grass for the same price per cut as last season. It was not felt necessary to obtain alternative quotes and the Parish Council accepted his quote for the coming season.

5164 – Planning Applications:

Planning Application No: 2021/2779/TCA – T1 - Goat Willow - Reduce limb by 20% (Up to 1.5m) T2 - Goat Willow - Coppice to ground level. Fir Tree Cottage, Batcombe – Works/Felling Trees in a Conservation Area. There were no objections to the proposed tree works and so the Parish Council decided to recommend approval.

Planning Application No: 2021/2537/FUL – Erection of steel framed apex building to cover existing slurry store. Horsehill Farm, Horsehill Lane, Batcombe – Full Application. There were no objections to the proposed building to cover the slurry store and so the Parish Council decided to recommend approval.

The Clerk reported that notification on an application to demolish the holiday let at Shortwood Farmhouse and for an extension and other alterations to the Farmhouse had been received that day, which was too late to go on the Agenda, but he had obtained an extension from the case officer to consider the application at the next meeting on February 2nd.

Planning Application Updates: The application to clad on all four sides a barn on land opposite Higher Greenscombe, adding a concrete pad and improving the track to the barn, so it could be used to house TB quarantined animals, had been approved. The application to alter the garage at Eastcombe Cottage to accommodate PV panels had also been approved, as had the Parish Council's application for tree works in the Playing Field.

An application had been submitted for prior approval for the conversion of a barn at Valley View Farm to a dwelling house. The Parish Council was not consulted on applications for prior approval and it was noted that the District Council could only refuse the application on a limited number of technical grounds. It was felt that residents should be made aware of the application and Janet Jones volunteered to place a notice on the Batcombe Facebook page.

Action: Janet Jones.

5165 – Budget and Precept for Year Ending 31st March 2023: A budget for the year ending 31st March 2023 had been enclosed with November's Agenda and agreed in principle at the December meeting. Since that meeting confirmation had been received that there would be an election in May 2022 and Mendip DC's Returning Officer had provided an estimate of costs of £100 for an uncontested election and £5,000 for a contested election.

The Clerk noted that a contested election in Batcombe was likely to cost less than £5,000 as Batcombe was a small parish, but even if the election cost £5,000 the Parish Council would still have a reserve of £11,750 at the end of the year (of which £1,000 was earmarked for the allotments and £4,000 set aside for the Playing Field). It was suggested that residents should be made aware of the cost of an election, but it was felt that this might discourage people standing for election to the Parish Council.

A decision on the precept had been deferred until the tax base for 2022/23 was known, so that the impact the increase in the precept will have on Council Tax can be calculated. [The tax

base is the number of Band D equivalent properties in Batcombe when taking into account the number of empty properties, various discounts (including 25% for single people) and the weighting of the different bands above and below Band D.]

Batcombe's tax base for 2022/23 was 216.7 which when revised for a 2.5% non-collection rate became 211.28. The revised tax base for 2021/22 was 211.09. A slightly higher tax base means that the same precept will require slightly less Council Tax from each resident.

It was agreed to leave the Parish Council's precept unchanged at £9,925. This would result in a Band D property with no discounts having to pay £46-98 towards the precept in 2022/23 instead of £47-02 in 2021/22, a reduction of 0.085%. **Action: The Clerk.**

5166 - Authorisation of Payments: Councillors authorised the following payments:

- £1,049.23 The Clerk – Salary for 3rd Quarter.
- £81.06 The Clerk – Expenses for 3rd Quarter.
- £75.00 Gary Butler – Cutting the allotments field hedge.
- £36.72 The Parish News – Photocopying in 2021.

5167 – Other Business – matters of information only:

Dog Running Free – A resident had expressed a concern about a dog running free in the village. It was felt that this was not Parish Council business.

Christmas – Jayne Cox felt that the village had put on a good show at the various events held over Christmas.

5168 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 2nd February 2022 at 7.30pm in the Jubilee Hall.

Janet Jones

2/2/22