

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage Tel: 01749 850934 e-mail: clerk@batcombe-parish-council-somerset.org.uk

You are Summoned to the Annual Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council to be held on Wednesday 11th May 2022 at 7.30pm in the Jubilee Hall, Batcombe

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. Election of Chairman & Chairman's Acceptance of Office

David Stevens remains the Parish Council Chairman until a new Chairman is elected but has indicated that he will not be returning to chair this item. Janet Jones remains the Vice Chair until the new Chairman is elected and so should chair this item. After the newly elected Chairman has signed their Acceptance of Office, they then chair the rest of the meeting. The Parish Council cannot do anything else until a Chairman is elected.

2. Apologies and Acceptance of Reasons for Absence

This is necessary as any member who is absent for six months, without the Council accepting their reasons for absence, automatically loses their seat on the Council.

3. Councillors' Acceptance of Office

The enclosed Acceptance of Office should be signed and witnessed by the Clerk either before the start of the meeting or at this point. Any Councillor not signing the Acceptance of Office by the end of this meeting automatically loses their seat on the Council - unless the Council resolves to extend the deadline to the next meeting. Councillors are reminded that their Return of Election Expenses should be sent to the District Council within 28 days of the election.

4. 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. All Councillors have 28 days to complete a new Register of Interests Declaration Form (enclosed). Please return this by the end of May to the Clerk who is required to keep a copy and who will forward it to the District Council's Monitoring Officer.

Please note that the District Council's Monitoring Officer has stated that where a Councillor has a pecuniary (i.e. financial) interest in an item they cannot take part in any discussion on that item. This includes making a statement on the matter before leaving the room.

5. Election of Vice Chairman

The main role of the Vice Chairman is to chair meetings of the Parish Council when the Chairman is absent or has a pecuniary interest in an item. If both Chairman and Vice Chairman are absent, Parish Councillors have to elect one of their number to chair the meeting.

6. 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.

7. Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 6th April 2022 to be agreed and signed. Enclosed/attached. *If you spot any typos or have any issue with the Minutes it is helpful to inform the Clerk before the meeting so that where necessary an amended version of the Minutes can be signed by the Chairman.*

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

9. 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. Our District Councillor, Michael Gay, remains in office until the District Council ceases to exist at the end of March 2023. An election for two seats in the Mendip South Division of the County Council will take place on May 5th. There are four candidates, two from the Conservative Party and two from the Liberal Democrats. Next April the two successful candidates will become our Councillors on the new unitary authority.

10. Allotments

We currently have two vacant allotments with one of the existing allotment holders having expressed an interest in taking on one of these. In the past we have charge £25 for a part year instead of the full £35. The rent for the allotments field of £220 is now due. The water supply to the allotments was damaged in Storm Eunice. The farmers, whose water supply the allotments supply is taken off, asked Justin Witcombe to repair the water supply and offered to pay for the parts needed. Justin has now completed the repair.

11. Footpaths and Highways

Nothing to report. A map giving details of the rights of way in the parish is enclosed.

12. Playground - Maintenance Report

The annual inspection of the Playing Field by RoSPA normally takes place in June, but I have not yet had confirmation of that.

13. Planning Applications – Planning Application Nos: 2021/2873/FUL & 2021/2874/LBC –

Erection of 1 single storey 2 bedroom dwellinghouse following the demolition of 2 agricultural buildings. Creation of new access to highway and division of the site into 3 parts.

Highfield, Eastcombe Lane, Batcombe. Full Application & Listed Building Consent.

Highfield is located at the junction of Eastcombe Lane and the A359. The property is actually in Upton Noble but adjacent to the boundaries of both Batcombe and Wanstrow and Batcombe Parish Council has previously been consulted on planning applications for this property. Highfield House is a Grade II listed building to the south of Eastcombe Lane. The agricultural buildings are located at the southern end of a field to the north of Eastcombe Lane. It is proposed to replace these with a bungalow creating a new access onto Eastcombe Lane. The site would then be divided into three: Highfield House; the new bungalow and the remainder of the field to the north of Eastcombe Lane.

Planning Application No: 2022/0758/HSE –

Erection of part two storey, part single story extension on site of existing single storey extension (to be demolished) and replacement of mono-pitched roof with a dual pitched roof.

Mill Cottage, Mill Lane, Batcombe. Householder Application.

This is an application by the new owner of Mill Cottage to replace the small single storey extension at the far end of Mill Cottage (as you go down Mill Lane) with a larger part two storey extension and

to replace the roof on the extension at the near end of the cottage. There are also a number of alterations to the main part of the house.

Planning Application Updates. *The application to vary the drawings for the planning permission for staff accommodation at The Three Horseshoes has been approved.*

14. Appointment of Staffing Committee and Employment Matters

Our Standing Orders require the appointment of a Staffing Committee. This Committee would consider any complaints against or grievances by the Clerk. The Committee should consist of three Councillors so that any appeal could be considered by the remaining Councillors. (As relatives of the Clerk, Ian Sage and Jayne Cox should not be members of this committee.) SALC recommend that the Staff Committee or a representative from it should conduct an annual review with the Clerk.

The Clerk has been asked to report any additional hours worked in the previous year at the May meeting. In 2021/22 the Clerk worked no additional hours.

15. Appointment of Village Hall and Heritage Room Representatives

The Council appoints a representative to the Village Hall Trust Committee. Currently this is Jayne Cox. (Please note that the member appointed as Village Hall representative needs to declare this in Part 2 of the Register of Interests Declaration Form as a category (a) membership.)

The Council has appointed the Clerk as its representative to help run the Heritage Room. This appointment should be confirmed, unless a Councillor wishes to take on this role. There are three Trustees running the Heritage Room and the role involves a commitment to open the Heritage Room on a Saturday afternoon and assist those inquiring about the history of the parish and its former inhabitants.

16. Arrangements for Review of Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Other Matters

Standing Orders require that the Council make arrangements at this meeting for the review of its Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Schedule of Assets, insurance cover, membership of other bodies, complaints procedure, procedures for handling requests made under the Freedom of Information Act, policy for dealing with the press, and social media policy. The Parish Council should also review the Emergency Plan for Batcombe. I suggest the following timetable: Financial Regulations to be reviewed at the June meeting; Social Media Policy and policy for dealing with the press to be reviewed at the July meeting; complaints procedure to be reviewed at the September meeting; Emergency Plan to be reviewed at the October meeting; budget to be considered at the November meeting; membership of other bodies to be reviewed at the December meeting; Standing Orders to be reviewed at the February meeting; and the Schedule of Assets, Risk Management Policy and insurance cover to be reviewed at the March meeting in time for the preparation of the Annual Report and renewal of the insurance.

17. Insurance Renewal

Our insurance is due for renewal on June 1st, and our insurance brokers Came & Company have not yet provided us with any quotes to renew the insurance. I hope to have something by the time of the meeting.

18. Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31st March 2022

The bank reconciliation for the fourth quarter to 31st March needs to be verified by a Councillor before the meeting and reported to the Council.

A copy of the Financial Statements is enclosed. The three columns show the previous year's figures, the budget for last year (which was set in the January of the previous year) and the actual figures for last year. The VAT Refund was £12,650 more than budgeted because of the VAT on the new play equipment that was reclaimed. The allotments rent was £70 less than budgeted because two allotments were vacant at the end of the year. The £66 raised for new play equipment came from the

Mendip Lottery Fund. As a result of the VAT claim on the play equipment that had not been included in the budget, receipts were £12,545 more than budgeted.

The cost of the grass cutting and trimming was £340 less than the budgeted figure because no cuts were undertaken while the play equipment was being installed and a free cut was provided by a potential new contractor. The cost of the electricity supply was £24 more than budgeted as Southern Electric doubled the standing charge. The cost of the water supply was £14 more than budgeted as the turf for the new play equipment needed watering. Maintenance consisted of £110 for hedgecutting, £15 for wood preservative, £65 for the molecatcher and £275 for tree work on the trees near the cricket net. Overall maintenance was £270 more than budgeted – although the level of maintenance needed is always difficult to predict. No annual inspection was required as an inspection was included in the cost of the new play equipment.

The grant for the new play equipment from Viridor Credits of £58,976 was paid directly to Sutcliffe Play South West and so does not appear in the Financial Statements. The Parish Council paid £15,823.60 for the new play equipment, most of which was the VAT on the equipment which was then claimed back. The net cost to the Parish Council was £3,357. There were also £150 in expenses for the opening celebration for the new equipment. The new gate cost £985.43 of which £164.24 was VAT which was claimed back. Overall Playing Field payments were £16,832 more than budgeted, because of the cost of the play equipment and new gate that were not included in the budget.

The Clerk's salary was slightly more than budgeted but his expenses were £100 less than budgeted. The £115 cost of the Zoom subscription had not been budgeted for, but no training had been undertaken or publications purchased in 2021/22. There was a £113 increase in the insurance premium because of the cost of insuring the new play equipment. Photocopying was £63 less than budgeted as paper copies of the Agenda and papers were not distributed during the pandemic and fewer copies were distributed afterwards. Most other administration expenses were largely as budgeted and overall administration costs were £14 more than budgeted.

The grants given by the Council were as budgeted. The expenditure on the allotments was £220 for the lease of the field and £75 spent on hedge cutting, which was £75 less than budgeted. £25 was spent reimbursing part of an allotment rent and £17 was spent on a Christmas tree for the Christmas Tree Festival. As a result of all the above, total payments were £16,814 more than budgeted, largely because of the purchase of the new play equipment and the new Playing Field gate.

Details of the earmarked money for the allotments and the play equipment are given on the back of the Financial Statement. At the end of the year there was £1,026 of allotments money of which £220 would pay for the lease of the field in May. The remaining play equipment money in the Parish Council accounts at the end of the year was £1,404 of which £824 has since been spent on the cricket net, mat and stumps.

The net result of the variations against the budget outlined above is a deficit of £2,354 on the year instead of the budgeted surplus of £1,915. This was due to the spending of the money raised for the new play equipment in previous years on the play equipment and the new Playing Field gate. At the end of the year the Parish Council had £16,312 in its funds, £4,851 more than anticipated in the budget. This is due to the fact that the Parish Council did not have to spend any of the £4,000 of its own money it had put aside for the new play equipment. Of the funds at the end of the year, £1,026 is set aside for the allotments, £1,404 was set aside for new play equipment and £77 for notice boards. This means that the Parish Council has funds totalling £13,806 that are not earmarked for specific items, (although £4,000 of this total had been intended for the new play equipment). This means that the Parish Council has sufficient reserves to cover the cost of the contested election and a by-election during the coming year (which is the most likely source of major unbudgeted expenditure). SALC recommend that a Parish Council has reserves of between one-third and two-thirds of its precept, which with the current precept means the reserves should be between £3,300 and £6,600.

Our internal auditor has indicated that he should be able to complete the audit by our June meeting, at which we need to agree the Annual Return.

19. Update on Budget for Year Ending 31st March 2023

Enclosed is an updated projection on this year’s budget. The first column shows the actual figures for last year. The second column shows the budget for this year as agreed in January. The third column is the updated projection for this year. This year’s precept of £9,925 has been received. The VAT repayment will be very slightly less than budgeted and £82.55 for the six months up to March 2022 will be claimed shortly. If one of the two vacant allotments is taken now and nine are let in November, the rent this year will be £10 lower than budgeted. If all ten allotments are rented out in November the allotments rent will be higher than budgeted because there will be two payments on two of the allotments.

With regard to payments, the cost of the cricket net and mat was less than budgeted and the photocopying is also likely to be less than budgeted. Overall the deficit of £600 on the year is likely to be less than budgeted (unless there are any unexpected costs during the year). The deficit is due to the likely election expenses. This gives funds of £15,713 at the end of the year of which £1,000 will be earmarked for the allotments.

20. Change of Bank Mandate

The Parish Council should only make payments by cheques (or standing orders) signed by two members of the Council (normally after authorisation at a Council meeting, although authorisation can be made retrospectively where payment is required before the next meeting). The Clerk has to be a signatory in order to receive bank statements but should not sign cheques. The other signatories are currently David Stevens, Janet Jones and Mary Comley. In the past the Chairman, Vice Chairman and two other Councillors have been signatories, which is useful in case two of the signatories are not present at a meeting – so we need two (or possibly three) additional signatories. Unfortunately, as relatives of the Clerk, Ian Sage and Jayne Cox should not be signatories. The change of the mandate requires a formal resolution.

21. Authorisation of Payment

Broker Network Ltd - £???.00 – Insurance premium via Came & Co. (Invoice not yet received)
T & E A Hollis - £220.00 – Rent of Allotments Field.
Kevin Gale - £160.00 – Grass cutting in April.

22. Other Business – matters of information only.

To confirm that arrangements are in place for the lighting of the beacon to commemorate the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee on Thursday June 2nd.

Please note that the Parish Council cannot make decisions on items that do not appear on the Agenda – so matters raised under this item are for information only.

23. Dates of Future Meetings - Next Meeting: Wednesday 1st June 2022 at 8.00pm in the Jubilee Hall.

Traditionally the Parish Council has met on the first Wednesday of the month. Thus for 2022/2023, the suggested dates, to be confirmed at the meeting, are:

<i>1st June</i>	<i>6th July</i>	<i>3rd August</i>	<i>7th September</i>	<i>5th October</i>	<i>2nd November</i>
<i>7th December</i>	<i>4th January</i>	<i>1st February</i>	<i>1st March</i>	<i>5th April</i>	<i>3rd May</i>

Wednesday April 5th would also be the date of the Annual Parish Meeting. The August meeting will only take place if required to consider planning applications. The Council normally meets at 8.00pm in the summer and at 7.30pm for the rest of the year. The Council should consider whether it wishes to continue meeting in the Jubilee Hall or return to have its monthly meetings in the main room of the Old School.

Rob Sage