

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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

You are Summoned to the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council to be held on Wednesday 1st June 2022 at 8.00pm in the Old School, 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. 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.

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 11th May 2022 to be agreed and signed.
Enclosed/attached.

5. Matters Arising – information updates only.

Jayne Cox to report on the Launch of the South East Somerset Pilot Local Community Network (LCN).

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

An invoice from Rob Patch for work undertaken in the allotments field has been received and paid.

8. Footpaths and Highways

As noted at the May meeting, the Parish Council has received a request from the Mendip Bridleways and Byways Association (MBBA) to contribute towards the cost of improvement to the track (an old road) that runs from Eastcombe Lane to Knoll Lane. It is hoped that this will be adopted as bridleway to provide a safe route for walker, cyclists and horseriders to get from Batcombe to Wanstow without having to use a section of the A359 (although they will still have to cross the main road at the end of Knoll Lane). Ginnie Jones from the MBBA will speak to the Parish Council about

this proposal. Details of the request have been e-mailed to Parish Councillors, although this doesn't mention the cost of the work or a suggestion donation.

Also at the last meeting it was suggested that the Parish Council should pay for Tom Price to undertake strimmer training and that the Council consider purchasing a strimmer for him to use on the footpaths in the parish. The cost of strimmer training varies from £80 to £280 and the cost of a strimmer from £90 to £260. If the Council decided to pay for the training and a strimmer further research would be needed to get the right strimmer and the best training.

9. Playground - Maintenance Report

We have received confirmation that the annual inspection of the Playing Field by RoSPA will take place in June.

Cricket net – our current insurers have responded and ask if the Cricket Club have insurance in case of injury. It is up to us to make an agreement with the Cricket Club. They add: “from an insurance point of view we have no problem if you are happy to accept the additional risk”. If we decide to change insurers at the extraordinary Parish Council meeting then we will need to consult the new insurers.

10. Planning Applications

None at present.

Planning Application Updates. *Nothing to report.*

11. Review of Financial Regulations

It is a requirement that our Financial Regulations are reviewed annually. As our current Financial Regulations were adopted six months ago in December 2021, I am unaware of any amendments that are needed. If any Councillor would like a paper copy of the Financial Regulations, please let me know.

12. Review of the Effectiveness of the System of Internal Control and Internal Auditor's Report

Our Financial Regulations (1.5) require a review of the effectiveness of our system of internal control before approving the Annual Governance Statement which forms part of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (see below). I believe our system of internal control to be more than sufficient for a small Parish Council. The details are given in the Financial Regulations. These include the budgetary process, the authorisation of all payments by the Council, the signing of cheques by two Councillors, who have to initial the cheque stubs and invoices, the quarterly bank reconciliations and the requirement for an internal audit.

Our internal audit has been undertaken by Griff Williams, who satisfies the necessary requirements of independence of the Parish Council and competence. A copy of the completed Internal Audit Report is enclosed – page 4 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR). The Parish Council needs to accept the Internal Audit Report before it can approve the Annual Governance Statement and the Accounting Statements (see next item).

13. Annual Return Section 1 – Approval of Annual Governance Statement 2020/21

Normally the Parish Council does not have to send the AGAR to the external auditor provided we send the external auditor a Certificate of Exemption and publish the AGAR on our website by June 30th. However, last year our expenditure was over the £25,000 limit for exemption from external audit at £25,374. In fact, it would not have made any difference if we had kept our expenditure below the £25,000 limit as we are one of the 5% of usually exempt parish councils that are selected for external audit each year.

Section 1 of the AGAR is the Annual Governance Statement (page 5 of the enclosed Annual Return). This has to be approved by the Council before the Council approves the Accounting Statements with a

separate Minute reference. I believe the Council can agree all eight statements, but the Council can only do this once the Internal Audit Report has been considered.

Note: Statement 4 - The Parish Council's accounts have to be available for public inspection for 30 working days that include the first ten working days in July.

14. Annual Return Section 2 – Approval of Accounting Statements 2020/21

Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is the Statement of Accounts (page 6 of the enclosed Annual Return) which has to be approved by the Council. The attached Financial Statements for last year show how the figures in the Statement of Accounts have been derived – the circled numbers refer to the boxes in the Statement of Accounts. There are significant variations (more than 15%) in boxes 3, 6 and 9 between the figures for last year and those for the previous year. In box 3 this is due to the VAT refund on the new play equipment and the new gate of £12,631. In box 6 this is due to the payment of the VAT on the new play equipment, the additional cost of the play equipment above the value of the grant from Viridor Credits and the cost of the new gate. In box 9 this is due to the addition of the purchase price of the new play equipment and the new gate to the Schedule of Assets (attached).

The Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities requires that signed copies of the Statement of Accounts, the Annual Governance Statement and the Internal Auditor's Report have to be published on the Parish Council website no later than June 30th, along with a bank reconciliation and details of all items of expenditure over £100 and any land assets.

15. Authorisation of Payment

Kevin Gale - £160.00 – Grass cutting in May.

16. Other Business – matters of information only.

To confirm arrangements for the lighting of the beacon to commemorate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee at 9.45pm on Thursday June 2nd.

17. Date of Next Meeting - Wednesday 6th July 2022 at 8.00pm in the Old School.

Rob Sage

Rob Sage – Clerk

25th May 2022