

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

Tel: 01749 850934

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

Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 1st June 2022 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 8.00pm.

Present - Councillors: Janet Jones – Chair, Jayne Cox, Peter Glaisher, Bryony Harling, Clare Kingston, Tom Price and Ian Sage.

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage, Clare Scully – County Councillor (from item 5246) and two members of the public.

5240 – Apologies for Absence and Acceptance of Reasons for Absence: Michael Gay – District Councillor had given his apologies.

5241 – Declarations of Interest: Jayne Cox declared an interest in the request from the Mendip Bridleways and Byways Association for a grant as a member of the MBBA.

5242 – Public Participation: Ginnie Jones from the Mendip Bridleways and Byways Association (MBBA) noted that an old road from Eastcombe Lane to Knoll Lane had been improved to provide a safe route for walkers, cyclists and horse riders from Batcombe to Wanstrow. Contributions towards the cost had been made by Upton Noble, Wanstrow Parish Council, the MBBA and the British Horse Society but there remained an outstanding £629 and Ginnie asked if Batcombe Parish Council would make a contribution towards this.

Steve Gilbert stated that he had written about environmental matters in the parish magazine and asked if the Parish Council wanted to get involved in seeing if people wanted to do things about environmental issues. A working party could gather information about issues such as the need for charging points for electric vehicles. There was general agreement that the Parish Council would support a working party if Steve was willing to set one up and the Chair volunteered to represent the Parish Council on such a working party.

5243 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 11th May 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5244 – Matters Arising: Launch of the South East Somerset Pilot Local Community Network – Jayne Cox had attended the launch of the pilot LCN based in Bruton, Castle Cary and Wincanton. The impression gained was that it was mainly focussed on the towns involved and it was not clear where small villages would fit or how useful the LCN would be to them. Jayne felt that it would be better for small parishes to group together. She also noted that Batcombe appeared well organised compared to some other parish councils.

Change of Bank Mandate – the Clerk reported that change of signatories on the bank mandate had now gone through after some difficulties with the technology.

5245 – Allotments: The invoice from Rob Patch for work in the allotments field had been received and paid. There were still two vacant allotments. The allotment field owner had expressed concern about the state of one of the occupied allotments and the allotment holder would be offered plastic sheeting to cover it. Peter Glaisher had done some strimming in the allotments field to keep it tidy.

5246 – District and County Councillors’ Reports: A written report from our District Councillor, Michael Gay, had been forwarded to Parish Councillors. Clare Sully, one of our County Councillors, arrived at this item and outlined her background before promising to attend Parish Council meetings on a regular basis. Clare also stressed the importance of Local Community Networks in the new unitary council and were intended to involve everyone.

5247 – Footpaths and Highways: The Parish Council agreed to contribute a one-off grant of £629 towards the cost of improving the track from Eastcombe Lane to Knoll Lane in order to provide a safe route for walkers, cyclists and horse riders from Batcombe to Wanstrow that avoided using the A359.

The Parish Council agreed to buy its own strimmer and to pay for Tom Price to undertake strimmer training. Tom Price volunteered to undertake research into a suitable strimmer for working on the footpaths in the parish.

5248 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report: The Clerk reported receiving confirmation that the annual safety inspection of the Playing Field by RoSPA would take place in June.

Cricket Net – the Parish Council’s previous insurers had no problem with the Cricket Club using the cricket net for practice but the Clerk would need to check with the new insurers.

It was noted that hazelnut bushes that had been planted to fill the gaps in the Playing Field hedge were growing. There was a report of children climbing on the roof of the bus shelter. The verge outside the Playing Field needed strimming.

5249 – Planning Applications:

There were no planning applications to consider.

Planning Application Updates: It was noted that amended drawings had been submitted for the planning permission for the extension at The Three Horseshoes.

5250 – Review of Financial Regulations: As the current Financial Regulations were adopted in December, no amendments were considered necessary.

5251 – Review of the Effectiveness of the System of Internal Control and Internal Auditor’s Report: The Clerk reported his belief that the Council’s system of internal control was more than sufficient for a small Parish Council. The details were given in the Financial Regulations and included the budgetary process, the authorisation of all payments by the Council, the signing of cheques at Council meetings by two Councillors, who have to initial the cheque stubs and invoices, the quarterly bank reconciliations and the internal audit.

Griff Williams was thanked for undertaking the role of Internal Auditor. Copies of the Internal Auditor’s Report had been enclosed with the Agendas. The Internal Auditor had no recommendations to make to the Council.

The Clerk noted that the Parish Council’s expenditure was £300 over the £25,000 limit which meant that the Annual Return would have to be sent to the external auditor. The Clerk also noted that even if the expenditure had been below the limit the Annual Return would still need to be sent to the external auditor as the Parish Council were one of the 5% of smaller councils selected for an intermediate review by the external auditors.

5252 – Annual Return Section 1 – Approval of Annual Governance Statement 2021/22:

Copies of Section 1 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return - the Annual Governance Statement - had been enclosed with the Agendas. Approval of the Annual Governance Statement was agreed and the Statement was signed by the Chair and the Clerk.

5253 – Annual Return Section 2 – Approval of Accounting Statements 2021/22: Copies of Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return – the Statement of Accounts – had been enclosed with the Agendas, along with a copy of the Financial Statements, considered at the previous meeting, showing how the figures in the Statement of Accounts had been derived. Approval of the Statement of Accounts was agreed and this was signed by the Chair, having previously been signed by the Clerk as the Responsible Financial Officer. It was noted that there were significant variations (of 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 was due to the VAT refund on the new play equipment and the new gate of £12,631 in 2021/22. In box 6 this was 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 2021/22 less the Contributing Third Party payment of £5,898 towards the play equipment grant in 2020/21. In box 9 this was due to the addition of the purchase price of new play equipment and the new gate to the Schedule of Assets.

5254 - Authorisation of Payments: Councillors authorised the following payments:

- £160.00 Kevin Gale – Grass cutting in the Playing Field (two cuts in May).
- £629.00 Upton Noble Village Hall – Contribution to track improvement.
- £60.60 Peter Glaisher – Paint for Westcombe telephone kiosk.
- £695.00 H J Sage & Son – Reimbursement for purchase of bench for Playing Field.
- £183.53 Read Agriservices – Legs for Playing Field bench.

5255 – Other Business – matters of information only:

Jubilee Beacon – Arrangements for the lighting of the Jubilee beacon at 9.45pm on Thursday 2nd July were confirmed.

5256 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 6th July 2022 at 8.00pm in the Old School.

Janet Jones
6/7/22