

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 6th July 2022 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 8.00pm.

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

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage.

5257 – Apologies for Absence and Acceptance of Reasons for Absence: Clare Kingston who was ill and Bryony Harling, childcare. Michael Gay – District Councillor had also given his apologies as he had Covid.

5258 – 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.

5259 – Public Participation: None.

5260 – Minutes of the Meetings held on Wednesdays 25th May and 1st June 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5261 – Matters Arising: Jubilee Beacon – Tom Price and Ian Sage were thanked for organising the lighting of the Jubilee Beacon on Burnell. All had gone well and the beacon could be seen clearly from the Jubilee Garden below the Jubilee Hall.

Audit – The Clerk reported that all the required items had been e-mailed to the external auditors PKF Littlejohn and their external auditor's report was awaited. These items included confirmation of the dates for the period when local electors may exercise their rights to examine the Parish Council's accounts, which were Monday 20th June to Friday 29th July.

Jubilee Lane – the Clerk reported that a letter of thanks had been received from the Upton Noble Village Hall Treasurer for the Parish Council's contribution of £629 towards the cost of the improvements to the Jubilee Lane connecting Batcombe and Wanstrow for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

5262 – District and County Councillors' Reports: A written report from our District Councillor, Michael Gay, had been forwarded to Parish Councillors.

5263– Allotments: The allotment field owner was still concerned about the state of the allotments and had spoken to Peter Glaisher about this. There was particular concern about an allotment that had been paid for but not worked and was overrun with weeds. Peter would speak to the allotment holder to see if he would agree to the allotment being sheeted down with plastic.

5264 – Footpaths and Highways: Following the agreement at the last meeting that the Parish Council would pay for Tom Price to undertake strimmer training and would purchase a strimmer for him to use on the footpaths in the parish, Tom had done some research into available courses and machines that was circulated to Councillors by e-mail. It was agreed that the Council would pay for Tom to attend the Somerset Training course at Castle Cary at a cost of £125 + VAT plus £32 + VAT for the assessment; and that the Council would purchase

a Mitox 360 UX Brushcutter from Read Agriservices at a cost of £260 + VAT. It was also agreed to purchase a forestry helmet, overalls, fuel and strimmer cord and that the strimmer should be serviced annually at a cost of £150. Tom offered to ask if the strimmer could be stored at Batcombe House.

Fingerposts – Jayne Cox reported that Bruton Town Council were planning to maintain their fingerposts and the District Councillor reported that the County Council may be able to provide volunteers with instruction in the restoration of fingerposts. It was agreed that the Parish Council should express an interest in this as there were Councillors willing to go on such a course. **Action – The Clerk.**

5265 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report: The Clerk noted that the report of the annual safety inspection of the Playing Field by RoSPA had not yet been received.

Ian Sage was thanked for installing the new self-closing pedestrian gate for the Playing Field and for installing the new GWR seat near the multi-play equipment, moving the low seat to the bottom of the Playing Field, and installing the new bench in the bus shelter. It was noted that the low seat would need to be rubbed down and treated. The Clerk also reported that a replacement sign acknowledging those contributing to the new play equipment had been ordered.

Tom Price volunteered to obtain an alternative quote to clear up and reduce the damaged oak tree in the Playing Field which would need planning consent. **Action – Tom Price.** (The fact that the tree on the triangle at the top of Mill Lane had died was raised and responsibility for this was discussed.)

The Clerk reported that the insurers had no problem with the Cricket Club using the cricket net for practice. It was noted that the Annual Fete at the end of August was being advertised but that the Parish Council had not yet received written confirmation that the Fete Committee had insurance in place. **Action – The Clerk.**

5266 – Batcombe Community Volunteer Group: A draft schedule of activities for the Community Volunteer Group to undertake in the parish produced by Tom Price had been distributed with the Agendas. Tom suggested that a monthly activity could be undertaken once a month. The Council's insurers are happy to insure the Volunteer Group provided risk assessments were undertaken, protective equipment such as gloves and stout footwear was worn, and any hazardous work was undertaken by professional contractors. Volunteers should use non-powered tools only and only cleaning materials that can be bought from shops. The Clerk noted that the Parish Council was a registered data controller and so can collect and store personal data of volunteers provided permission was granted. It was agreed to go ahead with the Group with Tom Price providing the necessary risk assessments for each activity. **Action – Tom Price.**

There followed some discussion over the maintenance of the War Memorial garden, which belonged to the Parish Council. For many years this had been undertaken by members of the local branch of the Royal British Legion but there was now only one person left caring for the garden. Peter Glaisher volunteered to speak to Nigel Humphries from the Royal British Legion and if the RBL could no longer look after the garden a request from volunteers would be made. **Action – Peter Glaisher.**

5267 – Planning Applications:

Planning Application Nos: 2022/1051/HSE & 2022/1052/LBC – Installation of replacement glazing, roof lights, one additional roof light, one window to North West elevation and internal alterations including replacement staircase, creation of ensuite bathroom, demolition of modern partition walls, reinstatement of door way and creation of new door way. Kings

Hayes, Gold Hill, Batcombe. Householder Application & Listed Building Consent. The Parish Council recommended approval as there were no objections to the proposed changes to the annex at Kings Hayes. The Parish Council did recommend that the conditions in the previous planning application should be adhered to, to protect the historic fabric of the former stables.

Planning Application Number: 2022/1309/VRC – Application to vary condition 2 (drawings) of planning approval 2018/0450/FUL to drawing 1820/P/06. To amend the design of the building to better suit the needs of the refurbished pub replacing ‘as proposed’ elements of the drawings with new ‘as proposed’ drawings as shown on new drawing 1820/P/06. The Three Horseshoes, Batcombe. Variation or Removal of Conditions. The Parish Council recommended approval as there were no objections to the proposed changes to the plans for the staff accommodation building at The Three Horseshoes.

Planning Application Updates: The application for a first-floor extension, detached plant room building and installation of extraction system at The Three Horseshoes had been approved. It was noted that the Conservation Officer had objected to the proposed extension and replacement roof at Mill Cottage.

5251 – Review of the Social Media Policy and the Press and Media Policy: Copies of the Social Media Policy and the Press and Media Policy had been circulated with the Agendas (and can be downloaded from the Parish Council website). It was noted that the main point about the Press and Media Policy was that formal contact with the Press (which is quite rare) should be left to the Chair and the Clerk to ensure a consistent approach in line with the Policy. Fortunately, the Parish Council has a good relationship with the parish magazine which is the main means of communicating with local residents.

It was also noted that all Councillors should be aware of the Social Media Policy when using social media and should avoid appearing to represent the Parish Council when posting personal comments. It was agreed that the Parish Council should set up a Facebook page and that Janet Jones should be the poster on the page with Bryony Harling as a potential back-up. As a result, it was agreed to amend the Social Media Policy – adding similar provisions for the Facebook page to those for the website in section 4.5. In addition, the policy should include the requirement to obtain permission from parents before posting photos of children. It was also agreed to review the Social Media Policy and the Press and Media Policy every four years. There was also discussion of setting up a WhatsApp group for the Parish Council although not everyone was familiar with this means of communication.

5269 – Effective Communication: Tom Price suggested that the Parish Council agree a model for effective communication and preventing excessive use of emails. He suggested that the use of “reply all” to group emails should be avoided where the response does not need to be sent to all and NRN be added to the subject line of e-mails where no response is needed by the sender. Tom also felt that it would be useful to get agreement on a reasonable response time before follow up emails are sent. To be discussed further at the September meeting.

5270 – Annual Grants from the Parish Council: It was agreed to provide the budgeted grants of £300 to the Village Hall (to pay for the Parish Council’s own meetings and for the committee meetings of other village organisations) and £200 to the Parochial Church Council for the maintenance of the churchyard. It was also agreed to give, as in previous years, two grants of £100 to Mendip Community Transport - under the section 137 power - and to the Mendip Citizen’s Advice Bureau.

5271 - Authorisation of Payments: Councillors authorised the following payments in addition to the above grants:

- £240.00 Kevin Gale – Grass cutting in the Playing Field (three cuts in June).
- £1,183.48 The Clerk – Salary and Expenses for the 1st Quarter.
- £15.00 Somerset Playing Fields Association – Annual subscription.
- £125.00 Somerset Association of Local Councils – 5 x New Councillor training.

5272 – Other Business – matters of information only:

None.

5273 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 3rd August 2022 if required for planning applications. Otherwise, Wednesday September 7th at 8.00pm in the Old School.

Janet Jones
7/9/22

