

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 5th October 2022 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 8.00pm.

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

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage, District Councillor – Michael Gay, and six members of the public.

5295 – Apologies for Absence and Acceptance of Reasons for Absence: Janet Jones, who was unwell. In the absence of the Chair, the Vice Chair chaired the meeting.

5296 – 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.

5297 – Public Participation: None.

5298 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 7th September 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Vice Chair.

5299 – Matters Arising: Allotments – Gary Butler had been asked to cut the inside of the hedge. The Clerk reported that a second allotment holder would be giving up their allotment when the rent was due on November 1st, leaving two vacancies. The Clerk to write to those giving up their allotments asking them to leave it as they had found it. **Action: the Clerk.**

5300 – District and County Councillors' Reports: Written reports had been received from our District Councillor Michael Gay and our County Councillor Claire Sully and had been forwarded to Parish Councillors. The District Councillor summarised his report, noting that the Planning Inspector had decreed that Mendip had allocated too many green spaces in its area and so would have to re-audit these again. He had forwarded to the Clerk a report on water abstraction in the local area which showed no problems and noted that there was a proposal to turn Torr Works into a reservoir when quarrying ceased in 2042.

5301 – Local Community Networks (LCNs): Parish Councillors had met as a Working Party on September 14th to consider the consultation on Local Community Networks and as a result had produced a leaflet for the parish magazine to inform local residents about the proposals for LCNs and the consultation, which would close on October 17th. The Chair and Vice Chair had attended a pop-up briefing on LCNs at Mendip District Council and Jayne Cox had attended a Mendip Rural Parishes Liaison Group meeting at Doulling Village Hall.

The consultation included three proposals for the allocation of parishes to LCNs – A, B and C. In A and B Batcombe would be in the same group of parishes centred on Shepton Mallet, and in C Batcombe would be in a larger LCN based around Shepton Mallet and Glastonbury. The Liaison Group had proposed two further options D and E. D would consist of a grouping of rural parishes separate from any of the towns and in E Batcombe would be part of a LCN based around Frome which would be split into two parts – the town and the rural parishes. Concerns were raised that if Batcombe was in a LCN with a town, the town would dominate proceedings to the exclusion of the rural villages.

A number of questions were raised about how the LCNs would run. Would they deal with planning and licensing like the old Area Boards? Would Parish Councillors have to do a lot more? What influence would parishes have? It was noted that the LCNs would be committees of the unitary council and it would be the unitary councillors who made decisions.

Councillors indicated a desire to be grouped with other like-minded villages rather than with a large town and there was a general preference for Option D. It was agreed to meet again on Thursday 13th October to produce a response as a Parish Council to the consultation by answering the questions on the online survey.

5302 – War Memorial Garden: The Horticultural Society had donated money for the upkeep of the War Memorial garden and four volunteers would be working in the garden on Saturdays October 8th and 15th to tidy it up for Remembrance Sunday. It was planned to put in low maintenance plants. The Clerk to ask Kevin Gale if he could cut the grass around the memorial when cutting the Playing Field grass. **Action: the Clerk.**

5303 – Footpaths and Highways: Sandy Hamilton asked if the Parish Council could organise a village clean-up, particularly of the footpath leading up to the Village Hall. It was noted that the Parish Council had to be conscious of its insurance liability, particularly when organising activities on the public highway. The maintenance of footpaths was the responsibility of the landowner and the Clerk was asked to write to the Church and the Village Hall to check who owned the footpath to the Village Hall that ran past the churchyard. **Action: the Clerk.**

Jayne Cox volunteered to check the state of road hedges around the parish. **Action: Jayne Cox.**

The Clerk reported that Somerset County Council were holding a Fingerpost Training Course on Thursday November 10th at The Canalside in Bridgwater from 9.30am to 1.30pm and a minimum of three volunteers were required to undertake the course. Ian Sage, Jayne Cox and Peter Glaisher volunteered to take the course.

5304 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report: The Clerk reported that Gary Butler had been asked to cut back the inside of the Playing Field hedge. It was agreed that the hedge should be laid. Jayne Cox volunteered to obtain quotes for the work and John Wiltshire would be asked not to cut the top of the hedge. **Action: Jayne Cox.** Peter Glaisher reported that he had filled some of the holes in the Playing Field where the mole runs had collapsed.

There were reports of children climbing on the roof of the shelter in the Playing Field and on the new goal nets. It was agreed that a sign reminding parents of their responsibility to supervise their children should be erected in the Playing Field. The Clerk to get a sign made up by Mendip Signs.

5305 – Planning Applications: Planning Application 2022/1929/TCA – T1 (Eucalyptus) - Fell. Strawberry Cottage, Batcombe. The Parish Council agreed to recommend approval as there were no objections to the felling of the Eucalyptus tree.

Planning Application Updates: Ian Sage reported that another set of plans had been submitted for the application for the extension and alterations to Mill Cottage and that the Conservation Officer was no longer recommending refusal of the application – although the neighbours were not happy.

5306 – Review of the Emergency Plan: A copy of the Council's Emergency Plan had been distributed to Parish Councillors before the meeting. The Plan had last been updated before the pandemic and was clearly out of date with many of the volunteers listed in the Plan having moved from the parish or no longer in the roles they had been. There was a need to update

details in the Plan and the list of volunteers, while reflecting on the experience of the pandemic when a group of volunteers in the parish came into effect independently of the Plan. Bryony Harling volunteered to discuss with the Chair as to how the list of volunteers should be updated. **Action: the Chair and Bryony Harling.**

5307 – Bank Reconciliation and Budget Update: The bank reconciliation for the first quarter of the year had been checked by the Vice Chair and was reported to the meeting.

A corrected budget update including the £629 contribution to the cost of Jubilee Lane and the £437.94 cost of the strimmer and protective equipment that had been omitted from the previous month's update had been distributed with the Agenda.

5308 - Authorisation of Payments: Councillors authorised the following payments:

£160.00 Kevin Gale – Grass cutting in the Playing Field (two cuts in September).

£1,148.49 The Clerk – Salary and expenses for the 2nd Quarter.

5309 – Other Business – matters of information only:

PAYE Penalty – A £100 PAYE penalty notice had been received in early September for not sending in a PAYE return on time. On investigation the penalty was discovered to be for not sending in a PAYE return for the months when the Clerk wasn't paid and has been appealed on the grounds that no payment was made.

Village Hall – The Village Hall Trust had questioned what meetings the grant from the Parish Council covered and whether the recent environmental group meeting was included. It was noted that the grant was intended to cover the cost of committee meetings of any village organisation. The Clerk was asked to check with the Trust's Booking Secretary as to how many meetings were covered by the grant. **Action: the Clerk.**

5310 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Thursday October 13th at 7.00pm in the Old School.

Janet Jones

2/11/22