

# BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

Tel: 01749 850934

e-mail: [clerk@batcombe-parish-council-somerset.org.uk](mailto:clerk@batcombe-parish-council-somerset.org.uk)

## **Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2023 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 7.30pm.**

**Present - Councillors:** Janet Jones – Chair, Jayne Cox, Peter Glaisher, Clare Kingston and Ian Sage.

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

**5357 – Apologies for Absence and Acceptance of Reasons for Absence:** Bryony Harling, Tom Price and Claire Sully – County Councillor.

**5358 – Declarations of Interest:** The Chair declared an interest in the authorisation of the payment to News from the Parishes as the magazine’s editor.

**5359 – Public Participation:** None.

**5360 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2023** were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**5361 – Matters Arising:** Precept - The request for a precept of £9,250, unchanged from last year, had been submitted to the District Council and acknowledged. Unfortunately, the tax base for Batcombe had fallen from 211.28 to 209.6, a reduction of 0.8%, which meant that the element of Council Tax resulting from the Parish Council precept would increase by 37p to £47.35 for a Band D property with no discounts.

The Chair checked whether the action points from the last meeting had been dealt with. Allotments – Peter Glaisher reported that he had spoken to the owner of the allotment field about the damage to the hedge and the parts of the car that had been left in the field when the car that had gone through the hedge had been removed. The field owner was in dispute with the car owner’s insurance company over this, but it did not involve the Parish Council as the tenants of the field.

**5362 – District and County Councillors’ Reports:** Written reports had been received from our District and County Councillors and had been forwarded to Parish Councillors. It was noted that arrangements for the Local Community Networks (LCNs) had been made and that Batcombe would be in the LCN based around Shepton Mallet along with Shepton Mallet while most of the rest of the Postelbury ward, including Upton Noble and Wanstrow, would be in the Frome LCN. It was also noted that under the unitary council there would be local planning boards based on the current districts with an overarching planning board at Taunton.

**5363 – Footpaths and Highways:** Serious issues had arisen on the roads in Batcombe during the recent icy weather, with particular problems on Hincombe Hill and Crows Hill but difficulties elsewhere as well. The state of Hincombe Hill had been reported to the police on at least two occasions and resulted in the school bus being cancelled and concerns about the state of the roads being raised on Facebook. Our County Councillor has been in contact with the Clerk and with Somerset Highways over the issues raised. Somerset Highways had promised to inspect Hincombe Hill, fill the grit bin and check the gulleys in the area. Highways had also

asked if the Parish Council would be interested in a 1 ton dumpy bag of grit/salt to be delivered to a farm for local use.

The residents present noted that there was a particular problem on Hincombe Hill with the water runoff and the shear drop into Pews Bottom farm. They asked if there could be more organised self-help to clear gulleys and spread grit. It was noted that Highways had attempted to clear the gulleys on Hincombe Hill before the freeze but were unable to do so as they were blocked with stones. It was also noted that volunteers organised by the Parish Council would need to undergo training to work on the highways and that the steep banks on the sides of the roads on the hills into Batcombe meant that there were limited places where grit bins could be placed. Concern was raised that the gulleys had been cleared just before the hedges were cut which meant that they were immediately blocked with the hedge trimmings.

The Clerk reported that the County Councillor was willing to come to a meeting to discuss the issues raised with a representative of Somerset Highways and it was felt this should take place as soon as possible. The County Councillor was looking into the possibility of local farmers spreading grit as a solution. Ian Sage noted that his farm insurance would cover him to clear snow from the highways but not to spread salt. He volunteered to store the dumpy bag of salt. It was suggested that something should be put in the parish magazine to thank those who helped out during the icy weather. It was also suggested that people should be encouraged to write to the County Council about the particular issues in Batcombe with icy roads.

Peter Glaisher reported that Bruton Town Council had obtained a grant from South West Heritage to repair their finger posts. It was reported that it cost around £570 plus VAT to repair a finger post. It was agreed to put fingerposts on the next month's Agenda.

Jayne Cox reported that contractors had been working on the Honeycliff bridleway with the help of volunteers.

**5364 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report:** The stop tap under the standpipe in the Playing Field had broken allowing water to run across the Playing Field. Thanks were extended to Tom Price and Peter Doring for attempting to turn off the water. Ian Sage was thanked for replacing the stop tap with a new one.

**5365 – Planning Applications:** Planning Application No: 2022/2462/HSE – Erection of outhouse study. Little Acre, Batcombe – Householder Application. The proposal was for a timber-clad outhouse consisting of a study and a shower room on the northern boundary of the property. Two objections to the proposal had been received from neighbours concerned at the loss of privacy from the position of the outhouse and were read to the meeting. It was noted that there was no drainage for the shower room in the plans and it was questioned as to whether a phosphate mitigation scheme was needed given that there were already three bathrooms in the main house at Little Acre. It was decided to recommend refusal on the grounds of the loss of privacy to the neighbouring property that would be overlooked, the visual impact from the prominent position on the property and the impact of an additional shower room on the property.

**Planning Application Updates:** The applications to fell a Sycamore tree and two Ash trees at Batcombe House had been approved.

**5366 – New Somerset Code of Conduct for Councillors** – A new model Code of Conduct for Councillors had been produced by the Local Government Association with the intention that the same Code of Conduct should be used at all levels of local government. The Somerset Association of Local Councils had produced a version for parish councils in Somerset, which had been distributed with the Agendas. While the new Code was based on the same principles as the existing Code and the requirements for declaring interests were virtually unchanged, the

text of the Code had been significantly expanded to include guidance of how to comply with its requirements. The Parish Council agreed to adopt the new Code of Conduct.

**5367 – Annual Parish Meeting** – It was agreed to hold a short Parish Council meeting at 6.45pm before the Annual Parish Meeting at 7.30pm. It was agreed to focus on Highways issues. The Chair to put together a talk and discuss at the next meeting. **Action: The Chair.**

**5368 - Authorisation of Payments:** Councillors authorised the following payments:

£57.48	News from the Parishes – Photocopying in 2022.
£35.00	Mendip Signs – New sign for Playing Field.
£112.00	Society of Local Council Clerks – Clerk’s Membership.

**5369 - Other Business** – matters of information only.

Westcombe Notice Board - The Clerk reported that a Westcombe resident was hoping to erect a new notice board to publicise events. It was felt that a new notice board was not needed and the existing one should be repaired.

**5370 - Date and Time of Next Meeting:** Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2023 at 7.30pm in the Old School.

*Janet Jones*  
*1/2/23*