

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 1st March 2023 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 7.30pm.

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

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage, Claire Sully – County Councillor and thirteen members of the public.

5371 – Apologies for Absence and Acceptance of Reasons for Absence: Tom Price and Michael Gay – District Councillor.

5372 – Declarations of Interest: Jayne Cox declared an interest in the planning application for Church Barns as a member of the Village Hall Trust. Peter Glaisher declared an interest in seeking sponsorship for the repair of the fingerposts.

5373 – Public Participation: Tourist tax – Steve Gilbert noted that wherever you stayed in the United States a tourist tax was charged on your accommodation and suggested that something similar could be done here on a voluntary basis. If adults paid £1 a night to stay in the village, the proceeds could be used for the benefit of the village. He asked the Parish Council to consider this. It was agreed to raise the issue at the Annual Parish Meeting and noted that nowhere else was doing this locally.

HGV – Jonathan Frost reported that another HGV had become stuck on the corner at Netherlea after coming down Cockpit Lane and asked if a No HGV sign could be placed at the top end of the lane. A request to Somerset Highways could be made for more signage. A weight limit was also suggested as a solution but was noted that there was already a weight limit at the top of the lane.

The Three Horseshoes Car Parking – Steve Gilbert raised a concern over parking at the Three Horseshoes if it were to become busy. Joshua Summers-Stevens, the Designated Premises Supervisor for The Three Horseshoes felt that there would be sufficient parking in the pub carpark at all times. The Chair suggested that the pub provide a point of contact in case there was an issue. It was noted that there had been issues with the contractors working on the pub parking badly on the junction by the War Memorial. The possibility of them using the Village Hall carpark was raised.

5374 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 1st February 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5375 – Matters Arising: Westcombe Telephone Kiosk – Bryony Harling noted that Kate Lusty had asked if use could be made of the telephone kiosk. It was noted that in other villages where the kiosk had been made into a book share, it had become a dumping ground.

5376 – District and County Councillors' Reports: A written report had been received from the District Councillor, Michael Gay, and had been forwarded to Parish Councillors. Noting

that the District Council would be replaced by the new unitary Somerset Council at the end of the month, Michael was thanked for his help and support over the last four years.

The County Councillor, Claire Sully, gave a verbal report, noting that under the new unitary Council there would be a Planning Board for East Somerset. She also noted the pressures that Somerset Highways were under from the sheer amount of work and communication required, and the concerns about the direction that licensing applications were being steered in. The Local Community Networks (LCNs) were looking to get established. She noted that gritting was an issue for Batcombe and was hoping that a network of volunteers could be established, looking at whether insurance could be included as part of a volunteer agreement.

5377 – Premises Licence Application for The Three Horseshoes – The following two items were brought forward on the Agenda because of the public interest. An application for a Premises Licence for The Three Horseshoes had been made to Mendip District Council with a closing date for objections on March 10th. The application proposes licensing the exhibition of films from 8.00am to 11.00pm, seven days a week, indoors; the performance of live music and the playing of recorded music from 11.00pm to 2.00am, seven days a week, indoors and outside; and the supply of alcohol from 8.00am to 1.00am, seven days a week, for consumption on and off the premises. The application also stated that the provision of late-night refreshment was being applied for but the relevant box had not been completed. The premises would be open 24/7 to hotel residents and their guests. The Designated Premises Supervisor was Joshua Summers-Stevens from Castle Cary. It was noted that there was no requirement for a licence for a performance of live music or to play recorded music between the hours of 8.00am and 11.00pm on premises authorised to sell alcohol provided the audience does not exceed 500.

Joshua Summers-Stevens explained that The Three Horseshoes had applied for a licence similar to that previously held by the pub but had been advised by the Licensing Officer to change the hours to those on the application. He noted the concerns raised by the neighbours of the pub over the late hours and stated that he only expected the late hours to be used three times a year, but would not be changing the application. It was noted that the Licensing Officer had justified the late hours on the grounds that a premises licence gave greater control than the alternative of applying for late night opening under a TENS.

Members of the public present noted that other local pubs had no problems with using TENS for occasional late nights; that the Village Hall had withdrawn its application when neighbours had raised concerns about the late hours on the application; and there was a concern that if there was a licence for late nights with music every night of the year that there would be a temptation for the current or future management to make use of that licence. The Parish Council decided to make a representation to the Licensing Authority on the grounds of the potential public nuisance of late hours every night of the year. **Action: The Clerk.**

5378 – Planning Applications: Planning Application No: 2023/0101/TCA - T1 – Apple – Crown reduction approx. 1-2m; T2 – Juniper – Fell. Pastoral, Linch Lane, Batcombe – Works/Felling Trees in a Conservation Area. The Parish Council decided to recommend approval as the Apple tree was too large and overhanging the patio and the Juniper was growing outward into Linch Lane.

Planning Application Nos: 2023/0311/HSE & 2023/0312/LBC - New openings for the insertion of windows to east elevation, roof lights to east roof slope, timber boarded door to north elevation. Church Barn, Church Farm, Batcombe – Householder Application & Listed Building Consent. The lower east elevation of Church Barn faced the open green space between that building, the Jubilee Hall and the Church and was left blank when the barn was converted to create the impression of the previous inward facing barns around a central courtyard. An application to insert windows in this blank elevation was withdrawn in 2021 after the Parish

Council and the Conservation Officer recommended refusal because of the impact of the changes on the Conservation Area, and the surrounding listed buildings that include Church Farm, the Old School and the Church. The current application had smaller windows being inserted in the blank elevation to address these concerns.

The owner of Church Barn spoke in favour of the application noting the dwelling was dark and airless and this was an attempt to make it into a domestic dwelling after consultation with the Conservation Officer, using smaller windows more in line with a barn. Concerns were raised about the impact on the Conservation Area and surrounding listed buildings given that the blank elevation had been one of the conditions of the Church Farm development. The Parish Council decided to recommend approval - subject to the Conservation Officer's report on the proposal.

Planning Application Updates: The Chair reported that the District Councillor had contacted her regarding the Parish Council's recommendation of refusal for the rear extension to Churchill Cottage. While he understood the Parish Council's reasons for recommending refusal, he did not believe that there were sufficient planning reasons to put it forward to the Chair of the Planning Board.

5379 – Footpaths and Highways: It was noted that the Bruton/Evercreech road had been closed at Milton Clevedon on February 28th for 3 days to allow for surface patching. There had been a proposed diversion via Carrot Hill, but this was changed after the Clerk pointed out that this was not a practical suggestion.

A half-ton bag of grit had been delivered to Portway Farm. Ian Sage had placed half on Hincombe Hill and half in Westcombe by the War Memorial and was thanked for distributing the grit. No date had been arranged for the proposed meeting with our County Councillor and Somerset Highways, but the Clerk reported that the County Councillor had promised to phone the following day. Clare Kingston reported that the person cleaning the gulleys in Westcombe was unable to do so because of overhanging ivy on the walls.

Fingerpost Repairs – a discussion about the possibility of repairing the damaged fingerposts in the parish had been deferred from the last meeting. Repairs would need to be done by a contractor. No provision for fingerpost repairs had been made in the budget for 2023/24. However, the Clerk reported that the budget update for the current year 2022/23 (see Minute 5385 below) indicated that the Parish Council was in a position to spend some additional money above what was set in the 2023/24 budget.

Peter Glaisher had undertaken a survey of the fingerposts in the parish and had found seven in need of repair. He had obtained an estimate for the total refurbishment of one sign with a broken finger which came to £885 + VAT. It was suggested that the Parish Council could undertake a rolling programme of refurbishment and could ask for contributions towards the cost. The Clerk was asked to contract SW Heritage to see if any grants were available for the repair of the fingerposts. **Action: The Clerk.**

5380 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report: Ian Sage reported that he had removed the pieces of hedge that had grown through the Playing Field fence and had been left when the hedge had been laid. He had also added a section of fence to fill the hole between the fence and the laid hedge that children were reportedly using to access the Playing Field. He had also erected the sign informing parents and carers that it was their responsibility to supervise their children.

Clare Kingston reported that the old swing frames need some new paint. She also reported that a child had had an accident falling onto sharp sticks protruding from the willow structure by the bench at the bottom of the Playing Field. Fortunately, the child was not seriously injured but it

was noted that the ends of the willow needed to be completely removed or woven into the structure.

5381 – Annual Parish Meeting – It was agreed that the focus of the meeting would be on Highways issues, organised by the Chair. There would also be the usual reports. It was agreed to invite Michael Gay to the meeting to thank him for his time as District Councillor. Jayne Cox volunteered to organise refreshments. **Action: The Chair and Jayne Cox.**

5382 – Review of Standing Orders: The Parish Council's Standing Orders had been adopted in February 2022 and were based on a model produced by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). Standing Orders should be reviewed annually but there were no amendments that needed to be made to the Standing Orders adopted the previous year.

5383 – Review of Schedule of Assets: – An updated copy of the Schedule of Assets had been enclosed with the Agenda. Since the Schedule had last been updated a year ago the wooden pedestrian gate to the Playing Field had been removed (which had an insurance value of £1,800). In addition, the cricket net and new benches had been added to the Schedule. This increased the value of the Parish Council's Assets from £62,819 to £62,857. It was noted that the values given were mainly the purchase price with no account made of depreciation or increase in value.

5384 – Review of Risk Management Policy and Insurance Cover: A copy of the Risk Assessment and Management document had been enclosed with the Agendas. This was essentially the same as the previous year's document, as there had been little change in the risks to the Council.

It was noted that the Parish Council was currently one year into a long-term agreement with BHIB Councils Insurance, agreed last year.

5385 – Bank Reconciliation and Budget Update for Year Ending 31st March 2023: The bank reconciliation for the third quarter of the year had been checked by the Vice Chair and was reported to the meeting.

A projection for the current year's receipts and payments based on expenditure to date had been distributed with the Agendas. Receipts were projected to be approximately £135 less than the budgeted figure because the allotments rent would be £50 less than budget due to the vacancies and the VAT would not be reclaimed until the next financial year. The VAT to be claimed in April would be just over £1,000 due to the VAT on the cricket net, the new benches, the strimmer, the hedge laying and the tree works.

The projection for the Playing Field expenditure was around £3,495 more than budgeted, due to the money spent on the new benches, the hedge laying, the tree works and the extra cost of the electricity supply.

The projection for the expenditure on Administration was likely to be £270 more than the budgeted figure. While the final recommendation for the Clerk's salary was more than budgeted because of the rise in the rate of inflation and the cost of Councillor training and insurance were higher than budgeted, the cost of the contested election was less than expected.

The projection for the expenditure on Grants was likely to be as budgeted. However, Other expenditure was likely to be £1,140 more than budgeted because of the additional cost of the contribution to the Jubilee Lane project and the purchase of the strimmer and protective equipment.

Overall, there was a projected deficit of £5,780 compared to a budgeted deficit of £730. This was mainly due to the unbudgeted expenditure on the new benches, the hedge laying, the tree works, the contribution to the Jubilee Lane project and the purchase of the strimmer. The

projected funds at the end of the year were £10,500 of which approximately £1,000 would be earmarked for the allotments. This was a reserve in excess of the recommended two thirds of the precept – even with the amounts spent on the items noted above.

Funding for the Coronation Celebrations – This was an item of potential expense that had not been included in the 2023/24 budget. It was noted that the Parish Council did have the power to support a local celebration and had done so in the past, for example spending £220 for a band for the Golden Jubilee dance and £240 for Jubilee tokens to be given to the children at the Diamond Jubilee. Bryony Harling, who was representing the Parish Council on the Coronation Committee, outlined the events taking place over the Coronation weekend. It was noted that Upton Noble Primary School was providing coins for the children who attended the school and that Cornish Ware was providing free egg cups for the young children in the village. It was suggested that the older members of the parish would also like something to commemorate the Coronation.

5386 - Authorisation of Payments: Councillors authorised the following payments retrospectively as payment had been required before the meeting:

£21.97 water2business – water supply to the Playing Field for six months.
£44.17 Read Agriservices –new stop tap for Playing Field.

5387 - Other Business – matters of information only.

Deeds – With the assistance of Clare Kingston, the Clerk had collected the deeds to the Playing Field and the War Memorial garden from the NatWest bank in Frome as NatWest was no longer providing a safe custody service. It was agreed to store the deeds in the fire-proof safe in the Heritage Room and to register the Playing Field and the War Memorial garden with the Land Registry. The Clerk reported that the visit to the bank had revealed that the change of signatories made in June had not been registered with NatWest and so the online process of changing signatories would have to be gone through again.

Meeting Dates – The Clerk requested that the dates of the June and July Parish Council meetings be moved to the second Wednesday of the month as he had important meetings on the first Wednesday of these months. Dates for the coming year would be agreed at the May Annual Parish Council meeting.

Frome Town Council had passed a vote of No Confidence in our MP David Warburton as he had not participated in parliamentary proceedings for over a year. The Parish Council concurred with this.

It was agreed to make up a Parish Council team for the Village Hall Quiz at the end of March.

5388 - Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 5th April 2023 at 6.45pm in the Jubilee Hall to be followed by the Annual Parish Meeting at 7.30pm.

Janet Jones
5/4/23