

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 4th January 2023 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 7.30pm.

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

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage, and one member of the public.

5344 – Apologies for Absence and Acceptance of Reasons for Absence: Peter Glaisher, Clare Kingston and Michael Gay – District Councillor.

5345 – 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.

5346 – Public Participation: Mick Betchley reported that a committee had been formed to plan the celebrations for the King’s Coronation in May and would report back to the Parochial Church Council, the Parish Council and the Village Hall Trust.

He also raised a concern about the mess that was left on the roads after the hedges were cut and felt that this should be cleaned up. Jayne Cox reported that Mary Comley had asked Somerset Highways if the gulleys could be cleaned after the hedge cutting rather than before. Mick Betchley was also concerned about the materials washing down Cockpit Lane, which filled the drains and caused flooding at Lark Rise. It was noted that blocked gulleys could be reported on the County Council website.

Mick also raised a concern about the speed limits on country lanes and commented on a proposal in Surrey to reduce the limit. It was noted that drivers should drive to the conditions and it was suggested that there should be a “blitz” on road safety.

5347 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 7th December 2022 were agreed as a correct record - after noting that Jayne Cox had helped with the treatment of the benches in the Playing Field - and signed by the Chair.

5348 – Matters Arising: The Clerk reported that there would be no national lighting of beacons for the King’s Coronation to differentiate it from the Diamond Jubilee last year.

5349 – District and County Councillors’ Reports: A written report had been received from our District Councillor Michael Gay and had been forwarded to Parish Councillors.

5350 – Footpaths and Highways: The Clerk reported that a car had left the road on Hincombe Hill presumably after hitting black ice and ended up in the top corner of the allotments field. One of the occupants had to be cut out of the car but there were apparently no serious injuries. The car had been removed from the field before Christmas leaving all five doors and the cut away roof in the field. The Clerk was asked to contact the owner of the field to see what she wanted done about the restoration of the hedge. **Action: the Clerk.**

Jayne Cox reported that Mendip District Council were sorting out the hedge on the Honeycliff bridleway that the landowner was not taking responsibility for.

5351 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report: Hedge Laying and Tree Works – It was noted that a good job had been made of laying the Playing Field hedge and of reducing the Oak tree. The invoice for the hedge laying had been delayed by the postal strikes but had arrived on the afternoon of the meeting. Ian Sage noted that there was only a small amount of timber resulting from the reduction of the Oak tree and this was being stored at Portway Farm until a decision was made about what to do with it. Ian Sage noted that the Playing Field fence needed tidying up where the hedge had grown through it and volunteered to undertake this work. **Action: Ian Sage.**

Willow Structure – It was agreed to remove part of the willow structure next to the cableway. Tom Price volunteered to undertake this work. **Action: Tom Price.**

Notice of Parental Responsibility – A suggested notice to replace the temporary one welcoming people to the Playing Field and which included a note about parental responsibility had been distributed with the Agendas. It was agreed to place this notice in the Playing Field. **Action: The Clerk.**

Grass Cutting Quote - Kevin Gale had provided a quote for cutting the Playing Field grass in the next season of £90 a cut. This was a £10 increase on the previous year, but it was noted that this was in line with inflation. The Parish Council accepted the quote.

5352 – Planning Applications: Planning Application No: 2022/2437HSE – Proposed single storey rear extension to dwelling and associated alterations. Churchill Cottage, Crows Hill, Batcombe – Householder Application. It was noted that the extension would be seen from Westcombe and that the new extension would mean that the footprint of the building was now twice that of the original cottage. After some discussion, the Parish Council decided to recommend refusal on the grounds of the increased footprint of the building and the visual impact of the building from across the valley in Westcombe, noting that the large amount of glass in the end wall of the extension could result in reflections having an impact.

Planning Application Updates: Planning permission and Listed Building Consent had been granted for the alterations to Lodge Farm which included the conversion of a barn and dairy to ancillary accommodation, the demolition of a cottage and other works to outbuildings. The application to fell a Cherry tree at Romsey Cottage on Kale Street had been approved.

5353 - Budget and Precept for Year Ending 31st March 2024 – A budget for the year ending 31st March 2024 had been enclosed with November's Agenda and the Agenda notes gave details of the budget. An amended budget had been enclosed with the December Agenda noting that the cost of the hedge laying in the Playing Field would be incurred in the current year instead of in next year's budget. The Council had approved the budget in principle at the December meeting with an unchanged precept of £9,925.

A final decision on the precept was deferred to this meeting in the hope that the tax base for 2023/24 would be known so that the impact of the precept on Council Tax could be taken into account – and the precept adjusted so that there would be no increase to the Council Tax resulting from the precept. Unfortunately, the District Council had not published the tax base for 2023/24 and so a precept would have to be set without knowing the impact on Council Tax. The Council agreed to keep the precept unchanged at £9,925.

5354 - Authorisation of Payments: Councillors authorised the following payments:

- £1,340.43 The Clerk – Salary for 3rd Quarter, including backdated pay from April 2022.
- £81.06 The Clerk – Expenses for 3rd Quarter.
- £1,680.00 Alex Bown – Hedge laying in Playing Field (£1,400 plus VAT).
- £660.00 Osborne Tree Services LTD – Reduction of Oak tree.

5355 - Other Business – matters of information only.

New Code of Conduct - The Clerk noted that there was a new Code of Conduct for Councillors in Somerset and that the Somerset Association of Local Councils was recommending that all Parish Councils adopt it. It was agreed to consider adopting the new Code at the next meeting.

Annual Parish Meeting – This would take place on Wednesday April 5th and consideration was given to inviting a guest speaker. Suggestions included the British Horse Society on road safety, the PCSO, an environmental speaker from Carymoor. It was also suggested that there could be an explanation of what the Parish Council does and consideration of undertaking a parish survey. The Clerk to invite the PCSO.

5356 - Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 1st February 2023 at 7.30pm in the Old School.

Janet Jones
1/2/23