

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

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You are Summoned to the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council to be held on Wednesday 1st March 2023 at 7.30pm in the Old School, Batcombe

Members are reminded that the Council has a general duty to consider the following matters in the exercise of any of its functions: Equal Opportunities (race, gender, sexual orientation, marital status and any disability), Crime & Disorder, Health & Safety and Human Rights.

Agenda

1. Apologies and Acceptance of Reasons for Absence

2. Declarations of Interest

It is the Councillors' responsibility to declare any interests they may have in any item on the Agenda. If you are uncertain, please ask the Clerk before the meeting.

3. Public Participation – Open village meeting for fifteen minutes for any member of the public to raise any issue relevant to Batcombe Parish. *The Chairman can invite members of the public to speak at this or at any other appropriate point in the meeting.*

4. Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 1st February 2023 to be agreed and signed. *Enclosed/attached.*

5. Matters Arising – information updates only. *None that do not appear on the Agenda below.*

6. District and County Councillors' Reports

An opportunity for the District and County Councillors to report on matters relevant to the parish, either in person or in writing.

7. Footpaths and Highways

The Bruton/Evercreech road will be closed at Milton Clevedon on February 28th for 3 days to allow for surface maintenance (patching). Originally there was a proposed diversion via Carrot Hill, but this has been removed after I pointed out that this was not a practical suggestion. No alternative diversion is currently in place.

A half-ton bag of grit has been delivered to Portway Farm to be stored for future need. No date has yet been arranged for the meeting with our County Councillor and Somerset Highways. However, Claire Sully believes that the County Council can facilitate a voluntary agreement with local farmers willing to grit – this would need to overcome the fact that farm insurance doesn't cover farmers to grit the highway.

***Fingerpost Repairs** – a discussion about the possibility of repairing the damaged fingerposts in the parish was deferred from the last meeting. Repairs would need to be done by a contractor. One*

estimate of the cost of a repair where part of a finger had been broken off given at the last meeting was in the region of £570 + VAT (based on repairs undertaken by Bruton Town Council). The Parish Council would need to make a list of the fingerposts that needed repair and obtain quotes for those it had decided to repair. The cost of repairing all the damaged fingerposts in the parish is likely to be significant.

No provision for fingerpost repairs was made in the budget for 2023/24. However, the budget update for the current year 2022/23 (see below) indicates that we will have a reserve of around £10,500 at the end of the year and have £1,000 in VAT to reclaim. Of this reserve approximately £1,000 is earmarked for the allotments and a further £1,500 (approximately) is the remaining money put aside by the Parish Council for work on the Playing Field. This leaves a general reserve of around £9,000. The recommended maximum reserve is two-thirds of the annual precept which is roughly £6,600. The Parish Council is therefore in a position to spend some additional money above what was set in the 2023/24 budget. The question is whether the Parish Council uses this money for fingerposts or considers other potential uses for the money. For example, if local farmers are able to spread grit there are likely to be costs involved. Do we want to buy a simple spreader for them to use? Do we want to contribute to their costs? Ideally, this would have formed part of the budgeting process.

8. Playground – Maintenance Report

Nothing to report.

9. 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 application states that the Apple tree is too large and overhanging the patio and the Juniper is growing outward into Linch Lane. Full details of the application can be found on the Mendip planning website at <https://publicaccess.mendip.gov.uk/online-applications/> by entering the planning application number into the search engine.

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 faces 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 of planning permission 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 has smaller windows being inserted in the blank elevation to address these concerns. Full details of the application can be found on the Mendip planning website at <https://publicaccess.mendip.gov.uk/online-applications/> by entering the planning application number into the search engine.

Planning Application Updates.

Nothing to report.

10. Premises Licence Application for The Three Horseshoes

An application for a Premises Licence for The Three Horseshoes has been made to Mendip District Council and the closing date for objections is March 10th. The application applies for the exhibition of films from 8.00am to 11.00pm, seven days a week, indoors; for 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 states that the provision of late night refreshment is also being

applied for but the relevant box has not been completed. The premises will be open 24/7 to hotel residents and their guests. The Designated Premises Supervisor is Joshua Summers-Stevens from Castle Cary. (Note: there is 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.)

11. Annual Parish Meeting

The Chair to report on proposals for the Annual Parish Meeting on Wednesday April 5th relating to issues on the roads.

12. Review of Standing Orders

All Councillors should have a copy of the current Standing Orders. An electronic copy of the Standing Orders can be downloaded from the Parish Council website on the Parish Council Documents page – if any Councillor needs a paper copy, please inform the Clerk. These Standing Orders were adopted in February 2022 and are based on a model produced by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). Standing Orders should be reviewed annually but I am not aware of any amendments that need to be made to the Standing Orders adopted last year.

13. Review of Schedule of Assets

The Schedule of Assets should be reviewed annually before the independent examination. Enclosed is an updated copy of the Schedule. Since the Schedule was last updated (a year ago) the wooden pedestrian gate to the Playing Field has been removed (which had an insurance value of £1,800). In addition the cricket net and new benches have been added to the Schedule. This increases the value of the Parish Council's Assets from £62,819 to £62,857. It should be noted that the values given are (mainly) the purchase price with no account made of depreciation or increase in value.

14. Review of Risk Management Policy and Insurance Cover

The Risk Management Policy should be reviewed annually before the independent examination. Enclosed is a copy of the Risk Assessment and Management document. This is essentially the same as last year's document as there have been little change in the risks to the Council.

The Insurance Policy should also be reviewed annually before the independent examination and before it is due for renewal in June. We are currently one year into a long term agreement BHIB Councils Insurance.

15. Bank Reconciliation and Update on Budget for Year Ending 31st March 2023

Financial Regulations require that each quarter a bank reconciliation is produced by the Clerk, checked by a member of the Council, and reported to the Council as soon as possible after the end of the quarter.

Financial Regulations also require an update on the budget each quarter. The enclosed/attached sheet with four columns of figures shows the accounts for last year, the budget for this year, receipts and payments to 6th February this year and a projection for this year based on expenditure to date.

Receipts are projected to be approximately £135 less than the budgeted figure because allotments rent will be £50 less than budget due to the vacancies and the VAT will not be reclaimed until the next financial year. The VAT to be claimed in April will be just over £1,000 due to the VAT on the cricket net, the new benches, the strimer, the hedge laying and the tree works.

The projection for the Playing Field expenditure is 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 is 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 is likely to be as budgeted. Other expenditure is 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 is a projected deficit of £5,780 compared to a budgeted deficit of £730. This is 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 are £10,500 of which approximately £1,000 will be earmarked for the allotments. This is 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 – As with the fingerpost repairs (see under Footpaths & Highways above) this is another item of potential expense that was not included in the 2023/24 budget. The Parish Council does have the power to support a local celebration and has done so in the past. For the Golden Jubilee we paid £220 for a band (which played at a Jubilee dance) and £450 for a bench (still in the churchyard). For the Diamond Jubilee we spent £240 on Jubilee tokens that were given to the children. It would be for the Parish Council to decide whether and how much to contribute. It should be noted that in the celebrations mentioned above the Parish Council made a contribution rather than footing the bill. (On the subject of national funding for Coronation celebrations, NALC have forwarded a letter from the Communities Minister dated 9th February stating that funding up to £10,000 was available from Awards for All but applications had to be made before the middle of February!)

16. Authorisation of Payments

The following payments are being authorised retrospectively as payment was required before this meeting:

£21.97 – water2business – water supply to the Playing Field (six months).

£44.17 – Read Agriservices – new stoptap for the Playing Field.

17. Other Business – matters of information only.

Deeds – By the time of the meeting I should have collected the deeds to the Playing Field and the War Memorial garden that are currently held in the NatWest bank at Frome, which is closing in May. NatWest is no longer providing a safe custody service so we need to decide what to do with the deeds. Either we store them in the fire-proof safe in the Heritage Room or we lease a safety deposit box. Neither the Playing Field nor the War Memorial garden appear to be registered with the Land Registry so we should probably look into doing this. Voluntary registration has a fee of £30.

18. 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.

Rob Sage

Rob Sage – Clerk

23rd February 2023