

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage Tel: 01749 850934 e-mail: clerk@batcombe-parish-council-somerset.org.uk

You are Summoned to the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council to be held on Wednesday 14th June 2023 at 8.00pm 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

This is necessary as any member who is absent for six months, without the Council accepting their reasons for absence, automatically loses their seat on the Council.

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 3rd May 2023 to be agreed and signed.
Enclosed/attached.

5. Matters Arising – information updates only.

Coronation Mugs – A consignment of Coronation mugs for Buckland Newton Primary School was delivered to Batcombe by mistake. The company providing the mugs organised their collection and delivery to Buckland Newton but the Parish Council was then billed for the delivery to Buckland Newton. Hopefully, that has now been sorted out. When Buckland Newton opened the delivery they discovered 12 mugs with “Batcombe Parish” on them and have since posted these mugs to us and declined an offer to pay the postage. We thus have 12 extra mugs.

6. Somerset Councillors' Reports and the Shepton Local Community Network

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

We have been notified that the first meeting of the Shepton Local Community Network (LCN) will take place on Tuesday July 31st at 7.00pm at Pilton Village Hall. A formal invitation will be sent later. The Council are asked to nominate a Councillor representative to attend the meeting. They will be trialling a hybrid meeting for those unable to attend in person.

7. Footpaths and Highways

A meeting with representatives of Somerset Highways had been arranged by the Somerset Councillor for Tuesday June 13th. Those who attended to report back.

An application has been made to CPRE Somerset for a grant to help pay for the restoration of the fingerposts. An initial grant has been applied for to repair two fingerposts this year. We have received confirmation from CPRE Somerset that they have set aside £500 for the repair of two fingerposts in Batcombe. We need to provide photos of the repaired fingerposts to claim the funds.

8. Playground - Maintenance Report

We have received confirmation that the annual inspection of the Playing Field by RoSPA will take place in June.

Thanks to the volunteers who worked on the willow structures in the Playing Field as part of the Big Help Out on the Coronation weekend.

Thanks to Ian Sage for organising the repair to the water pipe in the bus shelter and for repairing the broken stump in the cricket net.

Jayne Cox reports that the bin outside the Playing Field gate has been filled to overflowing twice in recent weeks and she has emptied it herself. The issue has been reported to the Somerset Council and more frequent emptying of the bin requested during the summer.

9. Planning Applications

Planning Application 2023/0802/FUL – Conversion of Long Barn to a single replacement dwelling (Class C3) following the demolition of The Cottage and associated works.

Lodge Farm, Batcombe – Full Application.

Planning permission and Listed Building Consent for the demolition of The Cottage and associated works to the main building and outbuildings was granted in 2022. The conversion of the Long Barn will provide guest accommodation and a gym. The Long Barn is a 19th Century milking parlour converted to stables in the 20th Century and now used for storage. A bat survey reveals that the Long Barn is used as a day roost for species of moderate conservation value – as mitigation new roosting features will be provided in the Long Barn.

Planning Application 2023/0934/HSE – Erection of rear single extension.

Herb Cottage, Chapel Row, Batcombe – Full Application.

As Cllr Bryony Harling is the applicant, she will need to leave the room while this application is considered. The application is for a single storey extension providing a dining/family room at the rear of the cottage. The extension will have a catslide zinc roof and larch weatherboard cladding with a natural stone plinth.

Planning Application Updates. *The application for the erection of an outbuilding at Mill Cottage following the demolition of two existing outbuildings has been approved by the new Somerset Council. The application for the erection of an outhouse study at Little Acre has also been approved. The Parish Council objected to the latter application. The planning website does not have the case officer's report so there is no indication why the application was approved.*

10. Review of Financial Regulations

It is a requirement that our Financial Regulations are reviewed annually. As our current Financial Regulations were adopted eighteen months ago in December 2021, I am unaware of any amendments that are needed. If any Councillor would like a paper copy of the Financial Regulations, please let me know.

11. Review of the Effectiveness of the System of Internal Control, Internal Auditor's Report and Certificate of Exemption from a Limited Assurance Review

Our Financial Regulations (1.5) require a review of the effectiveness of our system of internal control before approving the Annual Governance Statement which forms part of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (see below). I believe our system of internal control to be more than sufficient for a small Parish Council. The details are given in the Financial Regulations. These include the budgetary process, the authorisation of all payments by the Council, the signing of cheques by two

Councillors, who have to initial the cheque stubs and invoices, the quarterly bank reconciliations and the requirement for an internal audit.

Our internal audit has been undertaken by Griff Williams, who satisfies the necessary requirements of independence of the Parish Council and competence. A copy of the completed Internal Audit Report is enclosed – page 4 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR). The Parish Council needs to accept the Internal Audit Report before it can approve the Annual Governance Statement and the Accounting Statements (see next item). Griff has let me know that he may not be able to undertake the Internal Audit next year. This would mean that we have to find someone who is independent and competent to undertake the audit.

Parish Councils, whose income and expenditure are both less than £25,000, do not have to send the Annual Return to the external auditor provided they send a certificate of exemption (copy enclosed) signed at this meeting and publish the Annual Return on their website by July 1st.

12. Annual Return Section 1 – Approval of Annual Governance Statement 2022/23

Section 1 of the AGAR is the Annual Governance Statement (page 5 of the enclosed Annual Return). This has to be approved by the Council before the Council approves the Accounting Statements with a separate Minute reference. I believe the Council can agree all eight statements, but the Council can only do this once the Internal Audit Report has been considered.

Note: Statement 4 - The Parish Council's accounts have to be available for public inspection for 30 working days that include the first ten working days in July.

13. Annual Return Section 2 – Approval of Accounting Statements 2022/23

Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is the Statement of Accounts (page 6 of the enclosed Annual Return) which has to be approved by the Council. The attached Financial Statements for last year show how the figures in the Statement of Accounts have been derived – the circled numbers refer to the boxes in the Statement of Accounts. There are significant variations (more than 15%) in boxes 3 and 6 between the figures for last year and those for the previous year. In box 3 this is due to the VAT refund on the new play equipment and the new gate of £12,631. In box 6 this is due to the payment of the VAT on the new play equipment and the additional cost of the play equipment above the value of the grant from Viridor Credits in the previous year less the cost of the new benches, hedge laying and election last year.

The Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities requires that signed copies of the Statement of Accounts, the Annual Governance Statement and the Internal Auditor's Report have to be published on the Parish Council website no later than June 30th, along with a bank reconciliation and details of all items of expenditure over £100 and any land assets.

14. Authorisation of Payment

Kevin Gale - £180.00 – Grass cutting in May.

15. Other Business – matters of information only.

Citizens Advice – the four Citizens Advice organisations in Somerset – Citizens Advice Mendip, Taunton, Sedgemoor and South Somerset – have taken the decision to merge and from October 1st will become Citizens Advice Somerset. This is partly in response to the new unitary council replacing the district councils and partly to provide a stronger basis for the Citizens Advice centres in Somerset in the light of ever-increasing demand on their services. The Parish Council has for several years given an annual donation of £100 to Citizens Advice Mendip.

16. Date of Next Meeting - Wednesday 12th July 2023 at 8.00pm in the Old School.

Rob Sage

Rob Sage – Clerk

7th June 2023