

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 12th July 2023 in the Jubilee Hall School, Batcombe, commencing at 8.00pm.

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

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage.

5443 – Apologies for Absence and Acceptance of Reasons for Absence: None.

5444 – Declarations of Interest: Ian Sage and Jayne Cox declared an interest in the authorisation of the payment of the Clerk's salary and expenses as relatives of the Clerk.

5445 – Public Participation: None.

5446 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 14th June 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5447 – Matters Arising: Coronation Mugs – Clerk reported that a credit note for £168.10 had been received from FedEx for the delivery of the Coronation mugs to Buckland Newton Primary School that had been delivered to Batcombe by mistake and then mistakenly billed to the Parish Council. Ian Sage reported that there were nine mugs left. Peter Glaisher asked for three mugs to give to people associated with the parish. It was suggested that the remaining mugs were donated to the tombola at the Village Fete.

Change of Bank Mandate – the Clerk reported that the change of bank mandate adding new signatories to the Parish Council bank account and removing old ones had failed to go through for a second time and a third attempt would be needed.

Audit – the Clerk reported that the Certificate of Exemption had been e-mailed to the external auditors PKF Littlejohn and acknowledged and all the items required to be published under the Transparency Code had been placed on the Parish Council website. These included the Annual Governance Statement and the Accounting Statements approved at the previous meeting, an end of year bank reconciliation, details of any variations greater than 15% and a list of all items of expenditure over £100. In addition, the notice of the period when local electors may exercise their rights to examine the Parish Council's accounts had been published on the website and the parish notice board - this period ran from Monday 26th June to Friday 4th August.

5448 – Somerset Councillor's Report and the Shepton Local Community Network: A written report from Somerset Councillor Claire Sully had been distributed to Parish Councillors. The first meeting of the Shepton Mallet Local Community Network would take place on Tuesday July 31st at Pilton Village Hall and Jayne Cox volunteered to represent the Parish Council at the meeting.

5449 – Footpaths and Highways: Verge cutting – the grass verges on the roads in Batcombe had been cut at the beginning of July. Verges on minor roads are cut once during the summer in June or July. A complaint had been received that the verge cutting was late although this had been the usual time for several years. A complaint had also been received that cars emerging

from the allotments field could not be seen. Peter Glaisher was thanked for cutting back the vegetation around the allotments entrance.

Clare Kingston reported potholes on Back Lane and an issue with visibility around the Round House/Woodforde House. The Chair volunteered to speak to the owner.

Winter gritting – as nothing had been heard from Somerset Highways about insurance for volunteers to undertake the gritting it was agreed to defer consideration of the winter gritting to the next meeting. The Clerk to check with the Somerset Councillor if nothing had been heard by mid-August.

There was a discussion as to whether gully cleaning could be arranged to take place after the hedges were cut, but it was noted that hedge cutting took place throughout the period from August to March so it would be difficult to co-ordinate gully cleaning with hedge cutting. It was suggested that people be encouraged to report blocked drains and keep them clear where possible.

Fingerpost Restoration - as noted at the last meeting, CPRE Somerset had offered a grant of £500 to help pay for the restoration of two fingerposts this year. An initial quote of £885 + VAT had been received to restore the fingerpost by the Playing Field and alternative quotes would be needed for this and the fingerpost by the Old Post Office. It was noted that the paperwork from the Fingerpost training session had a list of contractors who could undertake the restoration work required.

Jayne Cox suggested that an item about rights of way and the responsibilities of landowner and users should be placed in the parish magazine. There was a particular concern about what animals were allowed in fields with footpaths. The Chair recommended that any item in the magazine should be written in general terms rather than about specific footpaths. Jayne also raised issues with parking and dangerous driving.

5450 – Dog Poo Bin: No response had yet been received from the Somerset Council on whether they would empty a dog waste bin installed by the Parish Council so it was agreed to defer consideration to a future meeting.

5451 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report: The annual inspection of the Playing Field by RoSPA should have taken place in June but the report had not yet been received.

It was agreed that the Fete Committee should be required to empty the bin outside the Playing Field after the Fete. The Clerk to inform them of this responsibility. **Action – The Clerk.**

It was reported that the waste pipe had become detached from the water fountain in the shelter. Ian Sage noted that the pipe to the water fountain now repaired had been deliberately damaged. Glass and litter had also been found in the Playing Field.

It was reported that a review of the pub had praised the Playing Field.

5452 – Planning Applications: Planning Application Number: 2023/1120/VRC – Application to vary condition 2 (drawings) of planning approval 2022/1051/HSE (Alterations to glazing including ...) Kings Hayes, Gold Hill, Batcombe. Variation or Removal of Conditions. Planning permission and Listed Building Consent for alteration to the glazing and various internal alterations to the coach house at Kings Hayes had been granted in 2022. There were now new owners applying to vary the drawings. The variations included the addition of a flue for a wood burning stove, a terrace at the rear of the building and some alterations to the glazing. The Parish Council decided to recommend approval as there would be minimal impact on the south elevation (seen as you enter the gates to Kings Hayes), although the flue would be visible.

Planning Application Updates: The case officer's report on the erection of the outhouse study at Little Acre had been received and distributed to Parish Councillors. The Clerk to e-mail the case officer and ask for a copy of the decision notice. **Action – The Clerk.**

The application for driveway, turning and parking area at Stonecot would have been considered by the Planning Board on July 4th but the result was not known. The case officer had recommended approval but the application had to go to the Planning Board as the change of use contravened the Local Plan.

New plans had been submitted for the application to insert windows in the east elevation at Church Barn with a reduction in the number of windows and rooflights. As a result, the case officer was reconsulting on the application with a deadline of July 28th. The Parish Council decided to hold an extra meeting on July 19th to consider the application again. **Action – The Clerk.**

It was noted that planning permission had been granted for the conversion of the Long Barn at Lodge Farm to a single replacement dwelling following the demolition of the cottage.

5453 – Review of the Social Media Policy and the Press and Media Policy: Copies of the Social Media Policy updated in 2022 had been circulated with the Agendas (and the Social Media Policy and the Press and Media Policy were available on the Parish Council website). It was noted that the main point about the Press and Media Policy was that formal contact with the Press should be left to the Chair and the Clerk to ensure a consistent approach in line with the Policy and that all Councillors should be aware of the Social Media Policy when using social media.

5454 – Annual Grants from the Parish Council: It was agreed to provide the budgeted grants of £300 to the Village Hall (to pay for the Parish Council's own meetings and for the committee meetings of other village organisations) and £200 to the Parochial Church Council for the maintenance of the churchyard. It was also agreed to give a grant of £100 and to the Citizen's Advice Bureau. A further grant of £100 to Mendip Community Transport would be given - provided that transport was still being offered in the local area. Peter Glaisher suggested increasing the grant for the maintenance of the churchyard and it was noted that this would need to be considered when the budget for the year ahead was set in November.

5455 - Authorisation of Payments: Councillors authorised the following payments:

- £180.00 Kevin Gale – Grass cutting in the Playing Field (two cuts in June).
- £1,274.48 The Clerk – Salary and expenses for the 1st Quarter.

5456 – Other Business – matters of information only: Insurance – confirmation had been received of the renewal of the Parish Council's insurance with Aviva arranged through BHIB Ltd.

Potential Waste Services Industrial Action – planned industrial action by Unite union members employed by Suez, Somerset Council's waste collections contractor, had been suspended while union members were balloted on an improved pay offer. If the industrial action went ahead, priority would be given to refuse and clinical collections, meaning that some residents could go multiple weeks without recycling collections.

War Memorial Garden – the borders in the garden needed attention. Tom Price proposed that a working party should tackle the garden once a quarter. Volunteers from the Parish Council were asked to help the following Saturday afternoon at 2.00pm.

Allotments – Peter Glaisher reported that car parts had now been removed from the allotments field. He also reported that an existing allotment holder was willing to take on the remaining vacant allotment and it was agreed to charge £12 for the remaining four months of the year.

It was noted that anyone could apply for a Tree Preservation Order.

5457 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 19th July 2023 at 8.00pm in place of the August meeting.

Janet Jones
6/9/23