

# 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 6<sup>th</sup> September 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 Meetings held on Wednesdays 12<sup>th</sup> July, 19<sup>th</sup> July and 9<sup>th</sup> August 2023 to be agreed and signed. Enclosed/attached.**

**5. Matters Arising – information updates only.**

*Annual Grants – acknowledgement and thanks for the grant has been received from Mendip Citizens Advice.*

*LCN – Jayne Cox attended the initial meeting of the Shepton Local Community Network in July. Somerset Cllr Philip Ham was elected Chair and Cllr Claire Sully Vice Chair. Issues discussed included planning, speeding, a lack of public transport and Batcombe's winter road issues. The next meeting will be held in October.*

**6. Somerset Councillors' Reports**

*An opportunity for the Somerset Councillors to report in person or in writing.*

**7. Footpaths and Highways**

*Bruton Roadworks – Somerset Highways adopted a "one-hit" approach to roadworks in Bruton during August, mainly to improve the junction at the bottom of Coombe Street. This resulted in access to Bruton from Coombe Street being blocked for the first half of August and the High Street being closed at periods during the day after this. Issues with asbestos, a sink hole and an historic drainage system have apparently held up the work, but it should be finished by September.*

*Hincombe Hill and Eastcombe Lane Road Closures – a Road Closure Order comes into effect from September 14<sup>th</sup> for Hincombe Hill (from Eastcombe Lane to the A359) and for Eastcombe Lane (53 metres from the A359). This is to allow Openreach to access overhead and underground network for fibre cabling works. The work is expected to take three days from September 20<sup>th</sup> to September 22<sup>nd</sup> between the hours of 9.30am and 3.30pm.*

*Grit and Determination (winter gritting) – as nothing has been heard yet from Somerset Highways regarding the insurance of local volunteers willing to undertake gritting in the parish, I have asked our Somerset Councillor to chase this up. I spoke to Claire Sully over the weekend and she is chasing up the insurance and promised to send us a draft of the agreement.*

*Fingerpost Restoration – as noted previously, CPRE Somerset have offered a grant of £500 to help pay for the restoration of two fingerposts this year with more grants available in future years to restore more of the parish's fingerpost. We have an initial quote of £885 + VAT to restore the fingerpost by the Playing Field and sent photos of this fingerpost and the one by the Old Post Office to CPRE Somerset in the grant application. We should obtain alternative quotes, and Bryony Harling has distributed to Councillors a list of suppliers suggested by the Somerset Council. We need to make a decision on who to approach for quotes.*

## **8. Litter and Dog Poo Bins**

*Discussion of the provision of a dog poo bin was deferred from the July meeting as we had not heard back from the Somerset Council on whether they would empty a dog poo bin if it were installed. This followed concerns over a significant amount of dog poo being placed in the bin by the Playing Field, which had been found to be overflowing with litter on several occasions. Since the July meeting I have been in contact with David Williams the Working Supervisor for id verde, the contractor Somerset Council uses to empty litter bins. He informs me that the litter bin outside the Playing Field is emptied weekly – and they would consider a twice weekly collection if required. Mr Williams suggests placing a separate dog poo bin in the area, which id verde would empty once a week.*

*The Parish Council has considered the provision of dog poo bins in the past and decided not to provide them over concerns about the smell and the fact that the Parish Council may eventually end up having to empty the bins. Any dog poo bin would need to be placed on the verge as the Somerset Council website states that they cannot empty bins on private land including land belonging to the Parish Council. We would need to get permission from Somerset Highways for wherever we wanted to put a dog poo bin.*

## **9. Playground - Maintenance Report**

*Annual Safety Inspection – The link to the report of the RoSPA safety inspection has previously been distributed to Parish Councillors. The link will expire shortly after this meeting so if you would like to retain a copy, please ensure you have downloaded and saved it. The link is*

*<https://playbase.rosaplaysafety.co.uk/Inspections/index.php?ID=2783A0E9-A1D5-FC42-8E7B-577570881096>*

*As noted at the time, most items are of low/medium risk with the actual risk of items being the same or slightly higher than the innate risk for that type of item. The exceptions are the toddler swing which has significant wearing of the chains – and it may be time to replace these – and the fact that the inspector is unable to inspect the cable attachments on the cableway because they are covered. The inspector recommends an annual inspection of the cable attachments, which would involve dismantling the cableway. As this would need to be done by the suppliers, the Parish Council agreed last year that no dismantling inspection was need until the cableway was five years old as it was unlikely to have any significant wear at this stage.*

*The inspector noted rot in the gateposts. This isn't a safety issue as the gateposts don't support the self-closing gate but they are of historic value as they hold the plaques noting the dedication of the Playing Field as a King George V Playing Field. The inspector also noted rot in the seat under the willow arch and trimmer damage to the posts supporting the overhead rings, which could accelerate*

rot in these posts. He also noted bowing in the picnic table, a trip hazard in the cricket net and recommended planned maintenance programme to control growth in the willow tunnel. None of these issues pose a significant risk, other than protruding growth in the willow tunnel which needs regular checking.

**Annual Fete** – As last year the Fete Committee have obtained their own insurance for the Fete rather than assuming that they would be covered by the PCC's insurance. The Fete Committee have paid £200 towards the cost of the electricity supply as requested and agreed to empty the litter bin outside the Playing Field. [I understand that the hire of a generator would cost around £250, so the Fete Committee may wish us to keep the electricity supply, especially if costs are reduced this year.] I asked Gary Butler to cut back the inside of the Playing Field hedge before the Fete. The Playing Field was left in a good condition after the Fete and there are no issues that I am aware of. There were no problems with the electricity supply this year (which may be a result of new cables being used to connect the supply.)

## **10. Planning Applications**

None at present.

**Planning Application Updates.** The application for a driveway, turning and parking area at Stonecot was approved by the Planning Board. The application for a single storey rear extension at Herb Cottage has been approved. The application to vary the drawings for the planning permission granted for the coach house at Kings Hayes has been approved, although the Listed Building Consent for this work is still being considered.

## **11. Review of the Parish Council's Complaints Procedure**

A copy of the Council's Code of Practice for handling complaints is attached and can be downloaded from the Parish Council website on the Parish Council Documents page. This was adopted on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2003, last amended on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2011, and is based on a model produced by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). This procedure is only for complaints about the actions of the Parish Council as a body. Complaints about the Clerk should be dealt with by the Staffing Committee in accordance with the Clerk's Contract of Employment; and complaints against individual Councillors for breaches of the Council's Code of Conduct should be made to the Somerset Council's Monitoring Officer. We have only had one complaint since the Code of Practice was adopted. I am not aware of any need to amend the current Complaints Procedure.

## **12. Bank Reconciliation and Budget Update**

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 31<sup>st</sup> August this year and a projection for this year based on expenditure to date.

Receipts are projected to be approximately £1,500 more than the budgeted figure. £900 of this is due to the VAT reclaimed on the new gate, cricket net, benches and hedge laying in the Playing Field at the beginning of this year instead of last year. There is also £297 in donations for the Coronation mugs and £283 in contributions to the cost of the electricity - £200 expected from the Fete Committee and an £83.39 rebate from SSE.

The projection for the Playing Field expenditure is about £90 more than budgeted, due to the increase in the grass cutting cost and the extra cost of the annual inspection (mainly due to the provision of template for the weekly inspections).

*The projection for the expenditure on Administration is roughly as budgeted. The insurance premium was slightly higher than budgeted, but there is no longer a bank custody fee. The Clerk's salary is likely to increase but no figures have yet been agreed.*

*The projection for the expenditure on Grants is likely to be as budgeted. Other expenses including those of the allotments are likely to be around £450 more than budgeted. This is due to the £509 cost of the Coronation mugs less the cost of cutting the war memorial grass which at £5 a cut will be less than budgeted. The net cost of the Coronation mugs comes to £212 when donations are taken into account.*

*Overall, there is a projected surplus of £880 compared to a budgeted deficit of £75. This is mainly due to the VAT on the new benches, cricket net, tree works and hedge laying in the Playing Field being claimed this year instead of last year. As a result, the projected funds at the end of the year are £11,524 – around £110 more than expected when the budget was made. It should be noted that approximately £1,000 of this figure will be earmarked for the allotments.*

### **13. Authorisation of Payment**

£??0.00 Kevin Gale – Grass cutting in the Playing Field and War Memorial in August (*invoice not yet received*).

£60.00 Gary Butler – Hedge cutting in the Playing Field.

*The following payments need to be authorised retrospectively; payment having been required before the meeting:*

£147.00 Playsafety Limited – RoSPA Playing Field safety inspection.

£180.00 Kevin Gale – Grass cutting in the Playing Field and War Memorial in July (two cuts)

£59.99 water2business – Water supply to Playing Field (leak when stop tap broke).

*Payments were also made to the Village Hall Trust (£300), Batcombe PCC (£200) and Mendip Citizen's Advice Bureau (£100); authorised at the July meeting – see Minute 5454.*

### **14. Other Business – matters of information only.**

*PCSO – we have a new PCSO, Louise Perry, who has arranged a meeting with the Clerk next week. Are there any issues to bring to her attention?*

*Mendip Local Plan – under the new Somerset Council the Mendip Local Plan Parts I & II remain in force for determining planning applications in the former Mendip Area. However, a judicial review has required Somerset Council to strike out and reconsider five housing sites in the Local Plan Part II. As a result, the Council is commencing a limited update to the Local Plan Part II. The rest of the Local Plan, including the other housing sites in Part II, is unaffected.*

### **15. Date of Next Meeting - Wednesday October 4<sup>th</sup> at 8.00pm in the Old School.**

*Rob Sage*

Rob Sage – Clerk

30<sup>th</sup> August 2023