

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 4th October 2023 in the Old 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, Claire Sully – Somerset Councillor and two members of the public.

5485 – Apologies for Absence and Acceptance of Reasons for Absence: None.

5486 – 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.

5487 – Public Participation: Camilla Frederick asked if Somerset Highways would grit the road through Batcombe this year and the answer was no – see further discussion under Minute 5491.

5488 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 6th September 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5489 – Matters Arising: LCN – The Shepton Local Community Network would be meeting on October 18th. Peter Glaisher volunteered to attend depending on the time of the meeting. The Clerk to distribute details of the meeting when they were available. **Action – The Clerk.**

5490 – Somerset Councillor's Report: Somerset Councillor Claire Sully gave a verbal update on the Grit and Determination project for volunteer farmers to grit designated roads and reported that the NFU Mutual had stated that if farmers had a policy with them then they were covered for gritting. Ian Sage noted that the local NFU Mutual had stated that his insurance only covered snow clearance and that adding gritting would mean an additional premium and likely to have limited liability. This meant that the Somerset Council would not be providing insurance. The Somerset Councillor noted that people's expectations would need to be managed and there would need to be clear communication from the Parish Council as to what the project would mean and which roads would be gritted.

Claire Sully also reported that Shepton Mallet Leisure Centre was closing and asked if there was any demand from this community. It would become a SEND centre and it was noted that special schools had a need for SEND centres. Peter Glaisher suggested that it be discussed at the LCN meeting, Claire Sully also noted that 2024 school places could be applied for and that people aged 11-17 could be nominated for a youth parliament. Clare Kingston expressed a concern about the shortage of places in special needs schools.

5491 – Footpaths and Highways: Grit and determination – Ian Sage noted that no grit had been delivered yet as the agreement was not in place – a half ton bag had been delivered last year but had been placed in the existing grit bin at Hincombe Hill and at Westcombe. Ian added that training would be needed for those doing the gritting. And if insurance came at a cost that would deter farmers from volunteering. Ian also noted that a small spreader would cost £2,750 plus VAT and would need to be purchased by the Parish Council. He also noted that the

combination of salt and bad weather meant the machine would not last long. There would need to be a text alert from Somerset Highways so that gritting would take place at the same time as the main roads were gritted. Claire Sully would talk to Somerset Council about training and noted that financial restrictions meant the Somerset Council could not contribute to funding the project. Ian Sage asked Clare Sully for details of who at NFU Mutual had said farmers were covered to grit.

Additional grit bins were not considered viable due to the question of where they could be situated and who could spread the grit from them in icy weather. It was noted that the work on the gulleys on Hincombe Hill had not been completed – the pots had been cleaned but the pipes were still blocked. Claire Sully to report this to Charlie Higgins at Somerset Highways. An extra meeting would be called to consider the project if answers to the questions on training and insurance had been obtained.

Fingerpost Restoration – two quotes for restoring two fingerposts had been received. One was significantly higher than the other. The lower quote would still be £650-£800 per fingerpost even with the CPRE Somerset grant. It was decided to leave any decisions on spending money on fingerposts to the budget consideration at the next meeting.

It had been reported that an articulated lorry had got stuck at the bottom of Cockpit Lane after attempting to turn around in a field entrance and lorries coming down Cockpit Lane and having to turn around was a regular occurrence. A local resident had asked if a No HGV sign could be placed at the top of the lane as at Hedgestocks and on the A359 junction. It was noted that there was already a sign on the junction from the main road at Leighton and that to allow lorries the option of turning around an additional sign would have to be placed near Brickhouse Farm in Wanstrow. It was agreed that Somerset Highways be asked to erect the sign and Wanstrow Parish Council be informed of the request. **Action – The Clerk**

It was noted that the blocking of the footpath from Baileys Lane due to protective fencing around building work at Ravenswood had been reported to the Somerset Council.

5492 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report: There was nothing to report.

5493 – Planning Applications: There were no planning applications to consider.

Planning Application Updates: The details reserved by conditions on the application for the Long Barn at Batcombe Lodge Farm had been approved. The application for windows in the east elevation of Church Barn had also been approved. The case officer had stated that because the Parish Council had recommended refusal the application had been referred to the Chair of the Planning Board who had decided that the application did not need to go to the Planning Board. The application for an ASHP and enclosure at Batcombe House had been approved.

5494 - Review of the Parish Emergency Plan: The list of volunteers in the Parish Emergency Plan had been updated by the Chair and Bryony Harling a year ago. The Plan had since been updated to reflect the replacement of the District and County Councils by the new Somerset Council and a copy of the updated plan distributed to Parish Councillors with a note that the Plan should be kept confidential as it contained the personal details of volunteers. It was suggested having a bad weather plan for the school and for the elderly needing to get out of the parish.

It was noted that Somerset Prepared was a multi-agency partnership working closely with communities to deliver advice support and training to help enhance local resilience to emergencies and that there was a Somerset Prepared Community Resilience Event at Wincanton Racecourse on Thursday October 5th.

5495 - Authorisation of Payments: Councillors authorised the following payments:

- £180.00 Kevin Gale – Grass cutting in September.
- £121.58 Somerset Association of Local Councils Ltd – Affiliation fee.
- £1,239.89 The Clerk – Salary and expenses for the 2nd Quarter.

5496 – Other Business – matters of information only: Bridge – Clare reported a concern about a bridge at Eastcombe that was in danger of collapse but it was not clear where the bridge was.

Allotments – Peter Glaisher reported that the allotments were in a good condition, although one allotment was not being kept up.

5497 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 1st November 2023 at 7.30pm in The Old School.

Janet Jones
1/11/23