

# BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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## Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2024 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 7.30pm.

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

**Also Present:** The Clerk – Rob Sage and three members of the public.

**5529 – Apologies for Absence and Acceptance of Reasons for Absence:** None.

**5530 – Declarations of Interest:** Jayne Cox and Ian Sage declared an interest in the authorisation of the Clerk's salary as relatives of the Clerk.

**5531 – Public Participation:** None.

**5532 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2023** were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**5533 – Matters Arising:** Allotments – Two allotment holders had not yet paid for their three allotments. A reminder had been sent but it was likely that there will be at least one vacancy to add to the existing one. It was noted that a new contractor would be needed to cut the allotments field hedge, but it was felt that the hedge did not need cutting.

Honeycliff Bridleway – Ian Sage reported that the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group was applying for funding to provide a pond to prevent excess water from running down the bridleway.

Reporting Planning Applications in the Parish Magazine – it was agreed that all planning applications should be reported in the parish magazine, although it was noted that notification of planning applications was often too late to be reported in the magazine.

**5534 – Somerset Councillors' Report:** No report had been received from the Somerset Councillors.

### **5535 – Planning Applications:**

**Planning Appeal** – Application No: 2023/0123/PAA Prior Approval for a proposed change of use of agricultural building to a dwellinghouse (Class C3) and for associated operational development. Land at 367699 137338 Copplesbury Lane, Milton Clevedon.

The appeal against the refusal of prior approval would be decided on the basis of an exchange of written statements and the Parish Council had until January 15<sup>th</sup> to make a representation to the Planning Inspector, if it wished to do so. The Parish Council is not consulted on applications for prior approval for a proposed change of use of an agricultural building to a dwelling house (Class C3) under The Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended), Part 3, Class Q. This application for prior approval was made in January 2023 and the agricultural building in question is a barn located at the far end of the field

opposite the entrance to Higher Greenscombe. While there appears to be confusion over the location of the barn, the field where it is located is in Batcombe.

Prior approval had been refused on the basis that the proposed works constituted a rebuild rather than a conversion and relied on a planning permission granted the previous year – which meant that the application did not meet the requirements under the legislation for permitted development. The appeal was being made on the basis that the proposal was actually permitted development under the legislation. Given the technical nature of the appeal the Parish Council decided to leave the decision to the Planning Inspector.

**Planning Application No: 2023/2342/FUL** Conversion of agricultural building to residential dwellinghouse, conversion of agricultural building to ancillary accommodation, conversion and minor works to redundant agricultural buildings to form incidental outbuildings (garaging, garden store, home office and utility), extension of the approved residential curtilage and formation of new access track to link existing access provision to an existing residential entrance. Barns at Valley View Farm, Hincombe Hill, Batcombe. Full Application.

The barns concerned were those around a courtyard at the end of the track from Hincombe Hill on Valley View Farm. The applicant had already obtained prior approval for the conversion of the southern barn to a two-storey dwelling house granted in January 2022 (Ref: 2021/2806/PAA). As noted above the Parish Council is not consulted on applications for prior approval. The new application sought permission to convert the northern barn to ancillary accommodation with two additional bedrooms and bathrooms and to convert the eastern barns to a utility room, garage, store and home office. It was also proposed to extend the residential curtilage and provide a new access track. The current residential curtilage was the immediate area around the southern barn only and it is proposed to extend this to cover all the courtyard and a proposed garden to the southwest of the main dwelling. The new access track would run to the northwest of the bungalow and barns at the entrance to Valley View Farm with the current access track running to the southeast of these buildings.

After discussing the application, the Parish Council decided to recommend refusal on the grounds that the extension to the residential curtilage into agricultural land was unjustified and the additional track had no drainage plan and would add to the water runoff onto Hincombe Hill with an increased the risk of ice in freezing weather on a road with a dangerous drop opposite the entrance.

**Planning Application Updates:** The applications for planning permission and Listed Building Consent for the rear extension at Donegal Cottage had been approved. The Parish Council had been notified but not consulted on an application to raise the crown of a Sycamore tree at Elm House. The Clerk to request that the Parish Council is consulted on tree works in the Conservation Area.

**5536 – Shepton Local Community Network Meeting:** The next meeting of the Shepton Local Community Network would be taking place on Thursday January 11<sup>th</sup> at Shape Mendip. Clare Kingston had volunteered to attend this meeting and Jayne Cox the following one. The Agenda for the LCN meeting had been distributed to Councillors and the main items for this meeting were the Somerset Council's financial position and Highways and Transport issues. It was noted that the Parish Council had responded to the Somerset Council stating that it was not in a position to take on any assets or services. On Highways and Transport issues the Parish Council's main concern was with drains and drainage.

**5537 – Footpaths and Highways:** Hincombe Hill – an e-mail had been received from Charlie Higgins at Somerset Highways noting that drainage repair works on Hincombe Hill were due to commence on February 19<sup>th</sup>. Somerset Highways were intending to install post and rail fencing in the gap in the hedge by the steep drop into Pews Bottom Farm in the new financial

year and had arranged for marker posts to be placed there as an interim measure. It was suggested approaching the landowners to see if they would install a crash barrier here but it was noted that the work would have to be undertaken by Somerset Highways. The Clerk to ask Somerset Highways whether the barrier could be installed this winter if the Parish Council and or the landowner contributed to the cost. It was also suggested approaching the tenants and or landowner to ask that the ditch above Hincombe Hill be dug out to reduce the amount of water running on the road. Ian Sage volunteered to approach the tenants. The Parish Council would be willing to contribute to the cost of the work if that would help.

Ice and Drains – Somerset Highways had made arrangements to deliver two 1-ton bags of salt/grit to Portway Farm and Ian Sage would deliver this to appropriate points. In the recent cold weather, the ice around the Round House had been particularly bad. Peter Glaisher noted that Somerset Highways were coming out to clear more drains but that many were buried under earth at the sides of the road.

No HGV sign at Brickhouse Farm – A request for No HGV signs by Brickhouse Farm in Wanstrow had been made to Somerset Highways and passed to their Traffic Management department for consideration.

**5538 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report:** The contract for the supply of electricity to the Playing Field had been renewed with SSE. The unit price had been reduced from that quoted to 26.591 p/kWh, but the quarterly charge remained £57.58.

Kevin Gale had not made any cuts of the grass in November due to a combination of wet weather and a broken foot. He had offered to make an extra cut during the winter if required and quoted the same price as the previous year to cut the grass in the Playing Field and around the War Memorial - £90 a cut once a fortnight. The Parish Council accepted his quote.

The litter bin outside the Playing Field was overflowing with waste, much of it dog waste. One option would be to remove the bin. The Clerk to chase up when the bin was last emptied. It was agreed to place a notice on Facebook asking people not to place dog waste in the litter bin and not to put anything in the bin when it was full.

Brendon Cox had offered to weave the willow structure and Tom Price offered to help. Clare Kingston to organise a date.

**5539 – Budget and Precept for Year Ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025:** A budget for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 had been enclosed with November's Agenda and the Agenda notes gave details of the budget. An amended budget had been enclosed with the December Agenda taking into account the increase in the Clerk's salary, a revised estimate of the cost of the electricity supply to the Playing Field, increased grants and the planned refurbishment of the Westcombe notice board. The Council had approved the budget in principle at the December meeting with an unchanged precept of £9,925.

A final decision on the precept was deferred to this meeting when the tax base for 2024/25 would be known so that the impact of the precept on Council Tax could be taken into account. Batcombe's tax base for 2024/25 was 212.78, slightly higher than the tax base for 2023/24 which was 209.60. A higher tax base meant each household paid less Council Tax for the same precept and so the Parish Council agreed to increase the precept so that the Council Tax resulting from the precept for households would be unchanged.

**5540 - Authorisation of Payments:** Councillors authorised the following payments:

- £1,431.43 The Clerk – Salary for 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter, including backdated pay from April 2023.
- £88.29 The Clerk – Expenses for 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter.

**5541 – Other Business** – matters of information only: there was no other business to report.

**5542 – Date and Time of Next Meeting:** Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2024 at 7.30pm in The Old School.

Janet Jones  
7/2/24