

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

Tel: 01749 850934

e-mail: clerk@batcombe-parish-council-somerset.org.uk

Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 3rd July 2024 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; Somerset Councillor Rob Reed; and two members of the public.

5625 – Apologies for Absence and Acceptance of Reasons for Absence: None.

5626 – 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. The Chair declared an interest in the setting of the grant for the Village Hall as a member of an organisation benefitting from free use of the Old School for meetings.

5627 – Public Participation: None.

5628 – Planning Application: Planning Application 2024/0687/HSE – Demolition of an existing single-storey rear extension and replacement with new single-storey rear extension with alterations to windows and doors. Cobblers Cottage, Kale Street, Batcombe – Householder Application. The Parish Council had considered the application for Listed Building Consent for these works at the previous month's meeting and had agreed to recommend approval. The Parish Council therefore agreed to recommend approval of the planning permission.

Planning Application 2024/0945/HSE – Loft conversion, enlargement of south east opening and raising height of existing stone wall. Home Farm, Home Farm Lane, Batcombe – Householder Application. The applicant noted that there was a need for repairs to the roof and to replace the rotten floor. The loft would then be used as an additional bedroom. The applicant added that the balcony for access to the loft would be smaller than shown in the plans. It was noted that the Parish Council could only consider the application on the basis of the submitted plans. It was felt that a Design and Access Statement was needed showing the impact on the footpath passing by Home Farm and a drainage plan was also needed due to the extra bathroom. The Parish Council agreed to recommend approval while noting the need for the Design and Access Statement and drainage plan.

A planning application for the Weaver's House had been received too late to be included on the Agenda and it was agreed to meet on Wednesday July 17th to consider the application.

5629 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 5th June 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5630 – Matters Arising: Village Hall Trust Grant – The hire charges for village organisations had increase to £8 an hour for the Old School and £11 an hour for the Jubilee Hall. The Clerk had estimated that the cost of the Parish Council's own meetings would be between £200 and £225 a year, leaving only £75-£100 to pay for other village organisations using the Old School for their committee meetings. Ian Sage proposed increasing the grant to the Village Trust by £100 to £400 and this was agreed.

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 last meeting; an end of year bank reconciliation; details of any variations greater than 15% between the figures for last year and the previous year in the Accounting Statements; 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 Tuesday 18th June to Monday 29th July.

Clerk's Annual Review – The Chair reported that the Clerk's annual review had taken place. Arising from the review was a need for greater clarity on what actions would be taken after Parish Council meetings and who would undertake them. For a three month trial period, the Clerk would read out a list of actions at the end of each meeting and then as soon as possible after the meeting e-mail Councillors with a list of the actions and who was undertaking them.

Communications – It was agreed that Bryony Harling would post the Parish Council article in the parish magazine on the Parish Council Facebook page each month. The Chair to provide Bryony with a copy of the article.

Sales – Jayne Cox reported that the highest offers for the wood from the Playing Field and for the former Playing Field gate were both £50. It was agreed to accept both offers and Jayne was asked to arrange the sales.

Mill Cottage – Bryony Harling would investigate if it was possible to find the address of the owners of Mill Cottage.

Cricket Net – The Clerk to respond to the Cricket Club stating that the Parish Council were happy for them to use the net in the Playing Field but if they wished to mow the run up the person doing the mowing would need public liability insurance. The Clerk would also state that as the Playing Field was in the Conservation Area any tree works on the trees overhanging the cricket net run up would need planning permission. Bryony Harling to provide the Clerk with the Cricket Club e-mail.

PCSO – Peter Glaisher to invite the PCSO Louise Perry to attend meetings of the Parish Council and provide her with dates of the meetings. He would also invite the PCSO to attend the Hub if meetings of the Parish Council did not fit her shift pattern.

Allotments – One allotment holder had not yet paid for his two allotments despite telling both the Clerk and the Chair that he wished to keep them. This meant that there were three vacancies. Bryony Harling to advertise the vacancies on the Nunney, Bruton and Lamyatt Facebook pages.

5631 – Somerset Councillors' Report and Shepton Local Community Network (LCN):

Rob Reed introduced himself as the new Somerset Councillor, noting that he was also an Evercreech Parish Councillor. He saw his role as one of listening and being a conduit. Following the merger of the County and District Councils there was some duplication of roles and some redundancies would be made. Somerset Council was working in partnership with the Somerset Rivers Authority. Cutting of the grass verges was not happening due to cutbacks but emergency cuts were taking place at junctions and at other dangerous spots. It was agreed that Jayne Cox should make a list of places where emergency cuts were needed and pass it onto Rob Reed. Clare Kingston noted that there were issues with traffic from the Glastonbury Festival. Ian Sage noted a rumour that all the enforcement officers at Somerset had retired and felt that there was a need for strong enforcement of planning decisions.

Jayne Cox reported on the Annual General Meeting of the Shepton LCN in June and stated that Philip Ham had been re-elected as Chair but Claire Sully was no longer Vice Chair. Jayne felt that it was good to get together with people who had similar problems but there was not a lot of

feedback from the Somerset Council and the police didn't turn up. Rob Reed noted that it was still early days and the LCN was still feeling its way.

5632 – Footpaths and Highways: Road Closures – Vinings Hill would be closed from 8.30am to 4.30pm to allow tree removal works on behalf of the Woodland Trust. Works were expected to begin on July 10th and last for 10 days. It was noted that the dates on the roadside signs were not readable and Bryony Harling volunteered to put the notices of the road closure on Facebook. The B3081 (Creech Hill Road between Bruton and Evercreech) would also be closed for three days in the period between July 17th and July 23rd for resurfacing.

Peter Glaisher reported a broken stile by the Alham Road cottages. It was noted that this was the responsibility of the landowner and Peter volunteered to speak to the landowner. Peter also reported that the situation with the footpath near Mill Farm was much improved.

Jayne Cox reported that the footpath between Bailey's Lane and Westcombe was overgrown and the footpath sign. Peter Glaisher volunteered to check the condition of the footpath and then speak to the landowner.

There had been no further sign of the person whose unauthorised camping on the footpath from Pugh's Bottom Farm to Eastcombe Lane had been discussed at the previous meeting.

5633 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report: The report on the annual inspection of the Playing Field by RoSPA in June had not been received. The moles had reappeared and then moved on again. There was an issue with the litter bin overflowing again and *id verde* had apoligised and emptied the bin.

Peter Glaisher volunteered to cut the inside of the Playing Field hedge this year. The Clerk to check with the Parish Council's insurers that this was covered by the insurance.

The Village Fete committee had requested permission to use the Playing Field from 9.00am on Saturday 24th August to the hand-back on Tuesday 27th August with the Annual Fete taking place on Sunday 25th August. The Parish Council were happy for the Fete to take place in the Playing Field but felt the hand-back should take place on the Monday as children wanted to use the Playing Field on the bank holiday. The Clerk was not available on the bank holiday and so the Chair volunteered to undertake the hand-back at 2.00pm on the Monday, checking that the Playing Field was safe for children to use. The Fete Committee would also be asked to cover up the bin outside the Playing Field and provide their own bins for the Fete.

The Fete Committee had asked for a reduction in the electricity contribution for the Fete. The Clerk reported that current standing charge for the electricity supply, which is only used at the Fete, was 63.1p per day or £230.32 a year. The actual electricity used at the Fete cost £3.68 last year. The Parish Council agreed to ask the Fete Committee for a contribution of £120 or roughly half the cost of the electricity.

It was reported that the water fountain in the Playing Field was turned off. Ian Sage stated that it had been turned on and he would check it. Green mould was growing in some of the play equipment. Ian stated that soapy water and a scrubbing brush would remove it. Clare Kingston was going to paint the swings.

5634 – Planning Application Updates: The application for solar arrays at Lower Eastcombe Farm had been approved.

5635 – Review of the Social Media Policy and the Press and Media Policy: The Social Media Policy had been updated in 2022 and the Social Media Policy and the Press and Media Policy had been reviewed in 2023. No changes were needed and all Councillors were encouraged to read the Social Media Policy before using social media.

5636 - Authorisation of Payments: Councillors authorised the following payments in addition to the grant for the Village Hall Trust agreed above (Minute 5630):

£180.00 Kevin Gale – Grass cutting in the Playing Field (two cuts in June).

£1,265.72 The Clerk – Salary and expenses for 1st Quarter.

It was agreed that the £500 grant for the repair of the church clock agreed at the last meeting should be paid to the Friends of Batcombe Church, who were raising funds for the clock.

5637 – Other Business – matters of information only. None.

5638 - Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 17th July 2024 at 8.00pm in the Old School.

DRAFT