

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 7th March 2012 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 7.30pm.

Present - Councillors: Chris Wildridge – Chairman, Jayne Cox, Iona FitzGerald, Liz Hollis, Bryan Mead, Ian Sage and Yvonne Sommer.

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage, and Gloria Cawood – County Councillor for item 3297 only.

3291 – Apologies for Absence: David Stevens - District Councillor.

3292 – Declarations of Interest: None.

3293 – Public Participation: None.

3294 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 1st February 2012 were approved and signed by the Chairman. Item 3289 – Jayne Cox noted that it was Colin Pool and not Libby Russell who had suggested planting an oak in Fuzzy Ground to commemorate the Jubilee.

3295 – Matters Arising: Litter – The Chairman had spoken to Nick Sommer who had said that it was too late in the year to organise a litter pick this year but he would be happy to organise one for next year. Allotments – The vacant half allotment had been advertised in the parish magazine and a current allotment holder had expressed interest in taking on the vacant half allotment that was next to their existing one. As no one else had expressed an interest, it was agreed to allow this.

3296 – Footpaths and Highways: Footpaths – The County Council was reviewing the vegetation clearance schedule and had asked if there were any additional paths the Parish Council was willing to maintain or any paths it was no longer able to clear. The Parish Council would not clear any additional paths but Yvonne Sommer would ask for the footpaths maintenance grant to clear the same paths as in previous years. There had been no response to the request in the parish magazine for people to contact Yvonne with any problems with footpaths. The Chairman asked that this item go on the Agenda in two months time. The Clerk had written to the County Council's Senior Rights of Way Officer, Mr Rob Coate, asking him to visit the bridleway at Honeycliffe himself. The Chairman suggested that the Rights of Way officer and the Highways officer be invited to view the bridleway together.

Highways – The road from Westcombe to Evercreech had been repaired and Charlie Higgins at Somerset Highways had informed the Parish Council that this was in preparation for surface dressing the road. He had also arranged for the parking area opposite the Church to be inspected and any safety defects repaired. Saite Lane had been repaired again but the waste tarmac had not yet been removed. The Batcombe sign at Hedgestocks had been pulled up one Saturday night in January and been replaced by Ian Sage. Concerns were expressed that recent roadworks were blocking roads without the roads being closed and so there was no warning of the delays being caused.

3297 – County Councillor's Report: The County Councillor's report had been e-mailed to Councillors. It was noted that under the draft recommendations for the Electoral Review of

Somerset Batcombe would be moved from the current Division to Mendip South which would stretch from Batcombe to Butleigh near Glastonbury. It was felt that this would not reflect Batcombe's historic links with Frome and Shepton Mallet. The County Councillor would report the Parish Council's concerns to the relevant committees. Yvonne Sommer was asked to undertake research on the historic links of the parish and a response would be made at the next meeting to the recommendations.

The County Councillor also stated that she had written to both Rights of Way and Highways departments about the Honeycliffe bridleway but they were not able to undertake a major repair. Yvonne Sommer noted that the Bridleways Association had offered to put some money towards the cost of a permanent repair in the past and would probably be willing to do so again. It had been proposed that gulley clearing would only take place every two years, but the County Councillor had been promised some flexibility for rural areas. The Clerk was asked to write to the chief executive of the County Council and ask what the schedule would be for the clearing of gulleys in our area.

3298 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report: Ian Sage was thanked for purchasing a padlock and chain for the main gate and some new rope for ramp on the fort, which he had attached. He had also replaced the rotten wood in the ramp to the fort. The Clerk reported that Mr Geoff Sparkes wished to increase the cost of cutting the Playing Field by £1 a cut. Although this was the third year of an agreement with Mr Sparkes to keep the price unchanged, in light of the significant increases in fuel prices over the last two years this was agreed.

Play Equipment Project – Iona FitzGerald reported that the application for a lottery grant had been unsuccessful. They had been offered some feedback on where the application had fallen short and would take this up and then reapply. The Working Party would also concentrate on some more of their own fundraising and look at other funding bodies.

3299 – Planning Applications: Planning Application No: 2012/0168. Works in association with the conversion of coachhouse to self contained annexe. Westcombe Stables, Westcombe – Listed Building Consent. The Council recommended approval of permission on the grounds that the main elevation would be unchanged and no one would see the additional windows at the back of the building.

Planning Application Updates: The application for an extension at Holly Cottage, Westcombe [*February 2012, Minute 3281*] had been refused permission by the Planning Board on the grounds that infilling the gap between Holly and Cherry Cottages would adversely affect the character of Holly Cottage and the street-scene; and that its scale and proximity to the boundary “would have an unacceptable impact on Cherry Cottage by virtue of an unacceptable overbearing impact”. The Clerk had written to the case officer expressing the Parish Council concerns that he had made his recommendation before the meeting of the Parish Council.

The application for ground mounted solar panels at Churchill Cottage, Crows Hill [*February 2012, Minute 3281*] had been approved, as had the application for alterations and extensions to Holly Hill House [*January 2012, Minute 3271*]. The application for the replacement of the outbuildings and sunroom at Millards Hill House [*December 2011, Minute 3255*] had also been approved.

3300 – Representation regarding Farmfest: The Parish Council was disappointed that Bruton Town Council had already made its own representation to South Somerset District Council regarding the Farmfest music festival at Gilcombe Farm, as a joint representation

would have carried more weight. Liz Hollis was asked to draft a letter for the Clerk to send to South Somerset DC on behalf of the Parish Council.

3301 – Batcombe War Memorial Wall: A section of the south wall of the garden around the War Memorial in Batcombe had collapsed and the rest of this wall needed to be rebuilt. There were also two patches on the east wall that needed attention. The Clerk had asked Kicko Cox for a quote, which came to £1,275. Given the high quality of Kicko's work and his connection with the parish it was agreed that additional quotations were not required under the terms of Financial Regulation 11.1(c). The Clerk noted that the Council had sufficient reserves to undertake this work this year but it would mean having to increase the precept in future years to replenish the reserves. The Chairman would talk to Nigel Humphries about asking for donations at the forthcoming British Legion talk by Jeremy Paxman. *[Post meeting note: The Bath and Wells Diocesan Board of Finance which owns the field on the other side of the wall has agreed to repair the wall using their own contractor.]*

3302 – Review of Risk Management: An updated copy of the Risk Assessment and Management document had been enclosed with the Agendas. It was largely unchanged from previous years but was required to be reviewed annually. The risk of the War Memorial wall needing repairs had been added. The Chairman would explore with the Clerk who was responsible for the Westcombe War Memorial and whether it should be insured.

3303 – Review of Insurance Policy: The insurance policy was also required to be reviewed annually. The Council was in the second year of a three-year agreement with Came & Co, which was providing sufficient insurance cover.

3304 – Review of Schedule of Assets: An updated copy of the Schedule of Assets had been enclosed with the Agendas. There were no changes from the previous year apart from some updating of the notes on the assets.

3305 – Annual Parish Meeting: The chief conservation officer, Mr David Clark, had accepted the invitation to be the speaker at the Annual Parish Meeting. Concerns had been expressed to the Chairman about the possibility of extending the Conservation Area Appraisal. He suggested that following the presentation a proposal might be put to the Annual Meeting to set up a working party to consider suggestions to amend the extent of the Conservation Area as raised at the February meeting of the Parish Council when the appraisal report had been considered. The Chairman suggested that the Parish Council should not take a position on these proposals at the current time. Councillors volunteered to provide items for the refreshments at the Annual Meeting.

3306 - Authorisation of payment: Councillors authorised the following payment:

£83.00 SLCC – Clerk's subscription to the Society of Local Council Clerks.

3307 - Other Business - Matters of Information: Liz Hollis and Yvonne Sommer reported back on the County Council Local Choice Event at the Bath & West Showground. This had been an interesting meeting and the County Council clearly wanted Parish Councils to take on more of the work done by the County. This was unrealistic for a parish the size of Batcombe, although it could take on something like the marking of potholes. Undertaking the cutting of the verges locally had been considered but would present numerous problems. The Chairman had e-mailed a report on the Neighbourhood Planning meeting at Somerton to Councillors.

Liz Hollis reported that the Sunrise Festival would be moving to the slot made vacant by the Glastonbury Festival this year and 11,000 people would be attending. It was being extended

by one day to include ceremonies around the summer solstice when 1,000 people would attend but no amplified music would be allowed. It had been agreed to have minimal late night activities on the Thursday and Sunday nights when local people had to work the next day but there would be late night dance music on the Friday and Saturday nights. The Parish Council had been invited to tour the site and offered the opportunity for a fundraising event at the Festival, such as a cake stall.

Yvonne Sommer reported that the security key for the light in the telephone kiosk in Westcombe had proved difficult to get hold of, but Nick Sommer was working on obtaining one.

The Revd Mark Ellis had suggested planting a tree for the Jubilee in the area by the Parsonage. The Clerk was asked to contact the Diocesan Property Office to see if permission might be given. An oak tree was suggested.

It had not proved possible to obtain alternative quotes for replacing the gate to the Playing Field. It was agreed to go with the quote from Mainstay Projects, but to ask if the gate could be made dog-proof, perhaps by adding some wrought-iron work.

The Chairman reported that the website should be sorted by April, after issues regarding the payment of the hosting fees had been resolved.

The Policing part of the Council Tax in Somerset had been frozen for the coming year, with the Police Authority taking the Government's one off grant of 3% in place of a Council Tax rise. In our PCSO's area reports of thefts continued. In January [REDACTED]'s Landrover had been stolen from [REDACTED].

45-50 MG cars (mainly pre-war models) would be passing through Batcombe on Saturday 14th April between 2.35pm and 3.35pm as part of the Kimber Classic Trial. The cars will be coming from Bruton, down Portway Hill, past the pub, up Walter's Lane, back down Cockpit Lane, then out to Lower Alham and back to Westcombe on the unclassified road, then down Spargrove Lane before heading for Milton Clevedon.

The recycling and refuse collections that would have taken place on Good Friday (April 6th) and on Friday April 13th will take place one day later on the respective Saturdays.

Work had been progressing on the Batcombe Heritage Centre (the records room in the Old School) and records were being catalogued ready for the opening in June.

3308 – Time and Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 4th April 2012 at 6.45pm in the Jubilee Hall, Batcombe to be followed at 7.30pm by the Annual Parish Meeting.

Chris Wildridge

4/4/12