

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

Tel: 01749 850934

e-mail: batcombepc@uwclub.net

You are Summoned to the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council to be held on Wednesday 7th June 2017 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

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 Meeting held on Wednesday 3rd May 2017 to be agreed and signed. Enclosed.

5. Matters Arising – information updates only.

Affordable Housing – the letter written to the Diocesan Board of Finance regarding the use of the glebe field for affordable housing has been acknowledged and passed to the Diocesan Secretary for the Board to consider. There has been no response to the letter written to the local landowner.

War Memorial – Rob Jones reports that as two of the contractors he approached have advised against cleaning the war memorial (which could damage the stone), he has removed this item from the proposed work. He has contacted the Conservation Officer at Mendip to confirm that he is happy with the proposed work and made an application for funding to the War Memorials Trust.

6. Election of Vice Chairman

The election of a Vice Chairman was deferred from the last meeting. The main role of the Vice Chairman is to chair meetings of the Parish Council when the Chairman is absent. Should the Council not elect a Vice Chairman, it will need to elect a chairman at any meetings when the Chairman is absent or for any items when the Chairman has a pecuniary interest.

7. Shindig Weekender Festival

Several complaints have been received about noise levels on the Friday evening from the Shindig Festival at Gilcombe Park, taking place over the weekend of May 26th – May 28th. These were passed onto the organisers who promised to address the issues. Noises levels seemed much lower on subsequent evenings although we have received one complaint about noise on the Sunday evening.

8. District and County Councillors' Reports

An opportunity for the District and County Councillors to report on matters relevant to the parish, either in person or in writing.

9. Footpaths and Highways – Presalting of the Road through Batcombe

It was agreed to put the withdrawal of the presalting of the road through Batcombe on the June Agenda so that our new County Councillor and the new portfolio holder could be informed of the issues involved.

Concerns have been raised by a resident regarding the impassibility of the footpath from Pugh's Bottom Farm to Eastcombe Lane.

10. Kale Street Stream - Pollution and Water Quality

A resident has raised concerns about pollution in the stream that runs parallel to Kale Street – which is cluttered with silage bags and has very poor water quality. The resident has reported the issue to the Environment Agency.

11. Playground - Maintenance Report and Preparation for RoSPA Inspection.

Mainstay Projects report that the rot to the legs of the multiplay apparatus was not as bad as was feared – only an inch or so deep in the worst places. They have chiselled away the rotten wood and sealed the legs with rubberised paint. They have re-concreted the braces on the zip wire and painted them as well, although there was no rot on these.

The annual inspection of the Playing Field by RoSPA will take place in June. We have agreed to pay an additional £42 so that we can accompany the inspector on his visit. The inspector will be arranging the dates for his inspections in June at the end of the month and RoSPA will then inform us of the date of his visit. We will need to arrange the replacing of the saddle unit so that the inspector can include it on his inspection.

The mole continues to be active but we have agreed not to discuss him/her until November.

I have not yet received confirmation of the schedule for emptying the litter bin by the Playing Field but I believe that it is fortnightly. However, I would suggest that the problem is not the frequency of collection but the fact that someone is putting bags of rubbish in the litter bin. I have noticed on several occasions black bags in the litter bin.

12. Planning Applications:

Planning Application No: 2017/1020/HSE

Erection of first floor and single storey extensions to existing single storey dwelling and recladding of existing building fabric; new single storey pool house; and car port.

Ravenswood, Baileys Lane, Westcombe – Householder Application.

The case officer has allowed an extension for the Council to consider the application at this meeting. The proposal is to considerably extend the existing three bedroom bungalow with the addition of a single storey extension, conversion of the garage and addition of a first floor extension over part of the existing building. This will create a six bedroom dwelling. There will also be a new pool house with a guest bedroom and bathroom that will be separate from the main building but attached to an existing outbuilding. There will also be a new carport/garage near the entrance and the footpath along the boundary of the property would become a grass and gravel track that will allow the owner access through the site and additional parking away from the house.

Concerns have been raised by neighbours on the opposite side of Bailey's Lane about being overlooked by windows on the first floor extension, although this issue has been addressed in the application. Concerns have also been raised by a Westcombe resident about the stated right of access to the track off the main road through Westcombe. The resident concerned believes that this track is a footpath only.

Planning Application No: 2017/1190/LBC – Replacement windows.

Batcombe Lodge, Batcombe – Listed Building Consent.

The case officer has allowed an extension for the Council to consider the application at this meeting. The proposal is to replace all the windows in this Grade II listed building which are approximately 25-30 years old with similar replacements made from ethically sourced wood (idigbo). Batcombe Lodge has distinctive Gothic windows on the front and side elevations and vernacular windows at the rear.

Planning Application Updates.

Nothing to report at present.

13. Review of Financial Regulations

Our Financial Regulations were adopted in June 2014 and are based on a model produced by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), with some amendments agreed by the Council where the model was not appropriate for a small Parish Council. Certain figures in the Regulations are set by the Council and should be reviewed annually. These are:

1.14 – ii) The suggested figure in the model was £5,000 (presumably based on a large town council with committees that have delegated powers to spend up to this amount.) The Council agreed £100 to cover items paid for by the Clerk and then reclaimed such as stamps. The same figure is used in Regulation 4.1.

4.5 - £500 is the figure recommended in the model regulations. This would allow for emergency safety work to be carried out in the Playing Field.

4.8 – The recommended figures for reporting variances against budget (£100 or 15% of the budget) seem appropriate.

5.5 c) – The figure of £10,000 allows the Clerk to transfer the precept to the reserve bank account (at the same bank) to earn interest.

6.18 – The limit for transactions on a debit card issued to the Clerk is academic as no such card has been issued.

11.1 – The figure of £60,000 is the EU Procurement threshold.

12.2 – The figure in the model was £250. £25 means that the sale of any moveable property would need to be authorised by the Council.

All Councillors should have a copy of the Financial Regulations. If any Councillor does not have a copy, please inform the Clerk. (Copy enclosed for our newly co-opted Councillor.)

14. Review of the Effectiveness of the System of Internal Control

Our Financial Regulations (1.5) require a review of the effectiveness of our system of internal control before approving the Annual Governance Statement which forms part of the Annual Return to the external auditor (see below). I believe our system of internal control to be more than sufficient for a small Parish Council. The details are given in the Financial Regulations. These include the budgetary process, the authorisation of all payments by the Council, the signing of cheques at Council meetings by two Councillors, who have to initial the cheque stubs and invoices, the quarterly bank reconciliations and the internal audit undertaken by Griff Williams, who is both competent and independent of the Council.

A copy of the internal auditor's report, comprising Section 4 of the Annual Return, is enclosed. This states that all the internal control objectives were achieved. The internal auditor had no other comments to make, other than suggesting that an allotments rent book should be kept.

15. Annual Return Section 1 – Approval of Annual Governance Statement 2016/17

The external auditor, Grant Thornton UK LLP, has set the submission date for sending in the Annual Return as 16th June 2017, which means the Annual Return needs to be considered at this meeting.

The Annual Return consists of four sections. Section 1 is the Annual Governance Statement (copy enclosed). This now has to be approved by the Council before the Council approves the Accounting Statements with a separate Minute reference. I believe the Council can agree all eight statements.

Notes: Statement 4 - The Parish Council's accounts now have to be available for inspection for 30 working days that include the first ten working days in July.); Statement 7 – last year's external audit pointed out that the approval of the Annual Governance Statement and approval of the Statement of Accounts should be minuted separately.

16. Annual Return Section 2 – Approval of Accounting Statements 2016/17

Section 2 of the Annual Return is the Statement of Accounts (copy enclosed) which has to be approved by the Council. The enclosed Financial Statements for last year show how the figures in the Statement of Accounts have been derived – the circled numbers refer to the boxes in the Statement of Accounts. There is a significant variation in boxes 3 between the figures for last year and those for the previous year. This is because of the grant received for the Housing Needs Survey in the previous year. The significant variation in boxes 6 is due to the money being spent on repairing the War Memorial wall and on the Housing Needs Survey. The value of fixed assets in box 9 is obtained from the Schedule of Assets.

The Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities requires that signed copies of the Statement of Accounts, the Annual Governance Statement and the Internal Auditor's Report have to be published on the Parish Council website no later than July 1st, along with a bank reconciliation and details of all items of expenditure over £100 and land assets.

17. Appointment of Staffing Committee and Employment Matters

Staffing Committee – The appointment of the Staffing Committee was deferred from the last meeting. Our Standing Orders require the appointment of a Staffing Committee, which considers any complaints against or grievances by the Clerk and conducts an annual review with Clerk. The Committee should consist of three Councillors so that any appeal could be considered by the remaining Councillors. (As relatives of the Clerk, Ian Sage and Jayne Cox should not be members of this committee.)

Clerk's Salary - The National Joint Council for Local Government Services reached agreement on new pay scales for 2017/18 last year. The National Association of Local Councils and the Society of Local Council Clerks jointly recommend these salary scales for all Clerks with the standard contract of employment. Under the new pay scales the Clerk's salary will increase from £10.632 to £10.739 from April 1st 2017. This is a 1% increase.

Pensions Declaration - The required declaration has been made with the Pensions Regulator stating that the Parish Council has no employees who qualify for automatic enrolment in a workplace pension scheme. The Clerk is not paid enough to qualify for automatic enrolment and has not requested that a pension scheme be set up.

18. Annual Grants from the Parish Council

The Parish Council has budgeted for a grant of £300 to the Village Hall (£100 for our own meetings, £150 for committee meetings of other village organisations and £50 to help with maintenance costs); for a grant of £200 to the Parochial Church Council for the maintenance of the churchyard and £200 for smaller grants to charities. Last year the Council gave two grants of £100 to Mendip Community Transport and Mendip Citizens Advice Bureau. In the past we have supported Victim Support Somerset; Mendip RELATE; the Bruton Carers Group; St Margaret's Somerset Hospice and Somerset Art Works.

The Council has the power to support the Village Hall Trust, to help maintain the churchyard, and to support the Citizens Advice Bureau, but grants to other charities must be made by a specific

resolution under the section 137 power, which allows the Council to spend a limited sum on items in the interest of parishioners which it has no specific power to support.

19. Authorisation of Payment

Gardens of Avalon - £???.00 – Grass cutting in May. *Invoice not yet received.*

Plus any grants approved under the previous item.

20. Other Business – matters of information only.

Housing Needs Survey – the end of grant report has been sent to Awards for All, who have reviewed the report and brought the grant agreement to an end. This means the Parish Council has no further obligations other than to keep records of what the grant was spent on for seven years.

21. Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 5th July 2017 at 8.00pm in the Old School.

Rob Sage

Rob Sage – Clerk

31st May 2017