

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 3rd April 2024 in the Jubilee Hall, Batcombe, commencing at 6.45pm.

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

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

5575 – Apologies for Absence and Acceptance of Reasons for Absence: Bryony Harling.

5576 – 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.

5577 – Public Participation: None.

5578 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 6th March 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5579 – Matters Arising: Allotments – The Clerk stated that the allotment holder who had yet to pay for the two allotments he held had been in contact and stated that he would pay. The Clerk could not confirm payment as the bank statement for March had not yet been received. If the allotment holder had not paid, he was to be given a deadline of one further month. If he did pay that would leave one vacant allotment. Jayne Cox was aware of someone in the parish who might be interested in the vacant allotment and would follow this up. Clare Kingston was aware of a demand for allotments in Nunney Catch and this could be explored if there were still vacancies, although it was some distance to travel.

Tourist Levy – Tim Chater reported that legislation to impose a levy on tourist accommodation was in the final stages of its passage through the Scottish parliament. There were no plans for similar legislation in England but some large City Councils had found a legal workaround to introduce a tourist levy through a Business Improvement District. Tim concluded that more work was needed. It was agreed to place it on the Agenda of the next meeting and to consider establishing a Working Party to look into how it would work in practice. The Working Party could include people involved in hospitality.

5580 – Footpaths and Highways: Road Closures – The Parish Council had been informed that Portway Hill would be closed for six hours from 9.30am on Monday April 8th to allow Openreach to replace a telephone pole. Notification had also been given that Eastcombe Lane would be closed by the junction with the A359 from April 22nd to May 3rd for Openreach to carry out overhead works. Bulls Lane in Upton Noble on the opposite side of the A359 would be closed at the same time.

Highways and Traffic LCN Subgroup – Peter Glaisher had e-mailed the notes from the inaugural meeting of the Subgroup to Councillors and felt the items raised should be discussed before the next meeting of the Subgroup. It was agreed to place it on the Agenda for the next meeting.

A resident raised a concern about a road drain and the Chair recommended reporting it on the Somerset Council’s website as there had been a good response to issues reported. Peter Glaisher

felt that the road drains needed to be brought up to standard before the Somerset Council reduced the level of maintenance undertaken. He volunteered to undertake a survey of the state of the drains in the parish.

5581 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report: Brendan Cox was thanked for weaving the willow structure in the Playing Field and Tim Chater was thanked for organising the Village Tidy-Up on Good Friday.

5582 – Planning Applications: The Parish Council considered the following applications for tree works in the Conservation Area and recommended approval in each case as there were no objections to the works:

Planning Application No: 2024/0507/TCA – T1 - Birch – Fell.
Sunnyside, Gold Hill, Batcombe – Works/Felling Trees in a CA.

Planning Application No: 2024/0529/TCA – T1 - Cedar – thinning of limb by 30%.
Rockwells House, Batcombe – Works/Felling Trees in a CA.

Planning Application No: 2024/0531/TCA – T1 - Willow – remove dead stems
Provis, Batcombe – Works/Felling Trees in a CA.

Planning Application No: 2024/0532/TCA – T1 – Cypress – Fell.
Lower Farm, Horsehill Lane, Batcombe – Works/Felling Trees in a CA.

As the Parish Council was only notified of tree works and not consulted, there was no opportunity to extend the deadline for comments. It was therefore agreed to delegate responses to tree applications to the Clerk after e-mail consultation with Councillors, to ensure a response within the deadline.

Planning Application Updates: The application for alterations to the fenestration and the use of the garage as office space at Pastoral had been approved.

5583 - Authorisation of Payments: Councillors authorised the following payments:

£1,249.43 The Clerk – Salary for 4th Quarter.
£88.29 The Clerk – Expenses for 4th Quarter.
£180.00 Mr K Gale – Grass cutting in March.

5584 – Other Business – matters of information only. Jayne Cox had attended the March meeting of the Shepton Local Community Network and had found it a depressing experience with the discussion of issues with the roads, flooding, the financial difficulties of the Somerset Council, increasing suicide rates, children not going to school and charities having no funding. The next meeting would be held on April 29th and Jayne volunteered to attend again. Batcombe had offered to host the LCN meeting in the summer.

It was noted that there would be a by-election on May 2nd to the Mendip South Division of the Somerset Council, following the resignation of Councillor Alex Wiltshire to take up a position abroad. There would be elections for the Police and Crime Commissioner on the same day.

It was also noted that 80% of the residents in the former Mendip and South Somerset areas would see a change to the day of their recycling and refuse collections from June 17th. Those residents whose day would change would be notified six weeks before the change.

5585 – Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 1st May 2024 at 7.30pm in the Old School. This would be the Annual Parish Council Meeting at which the Parish Council Chair was elected.

Janet Jones
1/5/24