

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage Tel: 01749 850934 e-mail: clerk@batcombe-parish-council-somerset.org.uk

You are Summoned to the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council to be held on Wednesday 3rd July 2024 at 8.00pm in the Old School, Batcombe

Note: the meeting may be held in the Jubilee Hall if the Old School is already set up as the polling station for the General Elections.

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

This is necessary as any member who is absent for six months, without the Council accepting their reasons for absence, automatically loses their seat on the Council.

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 the Meeting held on Wednesday 5th June 2024 to be agreed and signed. *Enclosed/attached.*

5. Matters Arising – information updates only.

Village Hall Trust Grant – The current hire charges for village organisations are £8 an hour for the Old School and £11 an hour for the Jubilee Hall. Assuming ten two-hour meetings in the Old School and one three-hour meeting in the Jubilee Hall, the cost of the Parish Councils own meetings come to £193 a year. With one or two extra meetings the cost will be between £200 and £225 a year – higher if we have to deal with a controversial planning application that requires meeting in the Jubilee Hall. Thus with our usual payment of £300, only £75-£100 will go towards paying for other village organisations to use the Old School for their committee meetings – which equates to five or six two-hour meetings a year. What we don't know is how many meetings there actually are by village organisations. The Village Hall Trust have said that the grant is used to cover the cost of meetings of the PCC, the Friends of Batcombe Church, the Film Society and the Horticultural Society but haven't said how many meeting each organisation holds. I know the Friends meet in committee members' homes and I suspect the Film Society does as well – apart from their AGM. This really leaves just the PCC and the Horticultural Society. If the PCC still meets in the Old School it may have six or seven meetings a year. The Horticultural Society may have a similar number in which case we should probably increase the grant by £75-£100 a year.

Audit – The Certificate of Exemption has been e-mailed to our external auditors PKF Littlejohn and acknowledged. All the items required to be published under the Transparency Code have now been placed on the Parish Council website. These include 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 have been published on the website and the parish notice board. This period must consist of 30 working days that include the first ten working days in July. For the Parish Council they run from Tuesday 18th June to Monday 29th July.

6. Somerset Councillors' Reports and the Shepton Local Community Network

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

Jayne Cox to report on the Annual General Meeting of the Shepton Local Community Network (LCN) held on June 10th in the Council Chamber at Shepton Mallet. The yearly report on the work of the LCN prepared for this meeting has been distributed to Parish Councillors. Councillors may wish to consider the proposed letter to the LCN Chair in the light of the report and the AGM.

7. Footpaths and Highways

Road Closures – the Parish Council has been informed of two road closures in July. Vinings Hill will be closed from 8.30am to 4.30pm to allow tree removal works on behalf of the Woodland Trust. Works are expected to begin on July 10th and last for 10 days. The B3081 (Creech Hill Road between Bruton and Evercreech) will be closed for three days in the period between July 17th and July 23rd for resurfacing. The road will be re-opened when no work is taking place.

8. Playground - Maintenance Report

The report on the annual inspection of the Playing Field by RoSPA in June has not yet been received. The moles have reappeared and there is an issue with the litter bin overflowing again. The Parish Council also needs to consider how to deal with the cutting of the Playing Field hedge, now that the person who used to cut it has retired.

We have received a request from the Village Fete committee for 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 Fete Committee have also asked if the electricity contribution needs to be as high this year, given that it is out of all proportion to the actual electricity used at the Fete (because of the standing charge over the year which has increased significantly). In 2022/23 the electricity supply cost £419 and it was on this basis that we asked for a £200 contribution towards the electricity from the 2023 Fete. By contrast in 2023/24 we were charged £165 for the electricity supply and received a refund of £83. With the £200 from the Fete we made a surplus of £118 on the electricity supply in 2023/24. The current standing charge is 63.1p per day or £230.32 a year. The unit cost of electricity is 28.311p per kWh but we only used 13 kWh last year (at the Fete) costing £3.68. There is VAT on these charges which we can claim back.

9. Planning Applications

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 considered the application for Listed Building Consent for these works at last month's meeting and agreed to recommend approval – details can be found in Minute 5613 of the attached Minutes. This is the application for 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.

Home Farm is at the end of Home Farm Lane and is outside the Conservation Area. The proposal is to convert the loft of the single-storey storage rooms behind the main house to provide a bed/living room and bathroom. The enlarged opening would provide external access via a stairwell to the converted loft and the raised wall would reduce the visual access and conceal the access platform.

Plans can be downloaded from the planning website: [2024/0945/HSE | Loft conversion, enlargement of south east opening and raising height of existing stone wall. | Home Farm Home Farm Lane Batcombe Shepton Mallet Somerset BA4 6HF \(mendip.gov.uk\)](https://www.mendip.gov.uk/2024/0945/HSE).

Planning Application Updates. *The application for solar arrays at Lower Eastcombe Farm has been approved.*

10. Review of the Social Media Policy and the Press and Media Policy

Copies of the Social Media Policy and the Press and Media Policy can be downloaded from the Parish Council website (Parish Council Documents page [Batcombe Parish Council Somerset - Parish Council Documents \(batcombe-parish-council-somerset.org.uk\)](https://www.batcombe-parish-council-somerset.org.uk)) if Councillors do not already have a copy. Both policies were last reviewed a year ago. All Councillors should be aware of the Social Media Policy (updated in 2022) when using social media and beware of appearing to represent the Parish Council when posting personal comments. The main point about the Press and Media Policy is that formal contact with the Press (which is quite rare) should be left to the Chair and the Clerk to ensure a consistent approach in line with the Policy.

11. Authorisation of Payment

Kevin Gale – £??0.00 – Grass cutting in June. (*Invoice not yet received.*)

The Clerk – £1,265.72 – Salary and expenses for 1st Quarter (*see attached sheet*).

12. Other Business – matters of information only.

None at present.

13. Date of Next Meeting - Wednesday 7th August 2024 at 8.00pm in the Old School if required to consider planning applications otherwise Wednesday 4th September.

Rob Sage

Rob Sage – Clerk

26th June 2024