

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 5th March 2025 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 7.30pm.

Present - Councillors: Janet Jones – Chair, Jayne Cox, Peter Glaisher, Bryony Harling, and Ian Sage.

Also Present: The Clerk and five members of the public.

5737 – Apologies for Absence and Acceptance of Reasons for Absence: Clare Kingston, who was ill and Tom Price who was away.

5738 – Declarations of Interest: Ian Sage and Jayne Cox declared an interest in the authorisation of the payment to the Clerk as relatives of the Clerk.

5739 – Public Participation: None.

5740 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 5th February 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5741 – Footpaths and Highways: The Council agreed to bring this and the following item forward on the Agenda due to the interest from members of the public in attendance.

The Traffic Engineer at Somerset Council had responded to the reporting of the farmer at Lower Alham Farm's concerns about vehicles attempting to use the track by his farm and getting stuck in the ford, by arranging to have it shown as a closed road until 2027 on the One.network, which in theory would remove this option from SatNav devices. Because One.network did not recognise the ford as public highway, it had to be plotted as two separate closures, either side of the ford and these closures should achieve the same outcome of showing the ford as a No Through Route. Mary Comley expressed local horse riders concerns about implications of these closures for the use of the track by horse riders and for the future of the track. The Clerk explained that the "closure" was only a method of ensuring that the track did not appear as a viable route on SatNavs. Mary Comley felt that this was a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) and wanted to know the details of the TRO and what it would mean long term. The Clerk to contact the Traffic Engineer and ask for the details of the TRO.

Adrian Amiri noted that complaints had been received by the Village Hall Trust about parking at Ash Tree Cottages during events in the Hall and stated that the Trust could not police parking in the village. He also noted that the recent wet weather meant that parking in fields was not an option.

Peter Glaisher stated that no progress had been made on the tree on the Spargrove footpath. Tom Price to be asked to follow this up as Parish Path Liaison Officer. The erosion of the road at the bottom of Baileys Lane had been reported to Somerset Highways. Peter Glaisher reported that the footpaths post had been removed from the footpath from Westcombe to Baileys Lane.

It was agreed that the information circulated to Councillors by Tom Price about footpaths and his role as PPLO should be placed on the Parish Council website. *[Discussed later in the meeting but included in the Minutes here as a Footpaths and Highways item.]*

5729 – Annual Parish Meeting: The Annual Parish Meeting would take place on Wednesday 2nd April. The Chair was preparing edited highlights of the film of the building of the Jubilee Hall and the official opening by Prince Charles produced by Derek Gregory. Tim Chater showed the Parish Council the presentation on the accommodation levy and community review that would be made at the Annual Parish Meeting. Tim noted that there may be funding available for a community review. It was noted that the accommodation levy could provide funding for activities in the parish but there would need to be a committee to decide what to spend money on and the Parish Council was conscious of the constraints on people's time with other commitments. The idea of the presentation was to communicate what was happening.

Adrian Amiri noted that the Village Hall Trust was financially stretched with work needed on the Jubilee Hall including a new water heater, new cooker and repairs to the gable end of the Hall and limited funds. The Trust was also considering the future of the Old School given the cost of electricity to heat the building and limited income from its use.

5743 – Matters Arising: Strimmer – Peter Glaisher reported that the cost of training to use the strimmer would be £500 and did not feel that this was worth the cost. As volunteers would not be insured to use the strimmer without training, it was suggested selling the strimmer. To be discussed with Tom Price.

5744 – Somerset Councillors' Report and Shepton Local Community Network (LCN): No reports had been received. The Shepton LCN had met on March 3rd and had been attended by Jayne Cox and virtually by Tim Chater. Jayne reported that the meeting had focussed on community plans. There were concerns about a lack of communication from Somerset Council and the non-attendance of the police.

5745 – Beeches Farm Development: The developer had requested the Parish Council's view on the new build proposal of 6 plots described at the February meeting. The Parish Council felt that the new build proposal was a distinct improvement on the Class Q conversion with 9 plots and would be in favour of a proposal along these lines with no more than 6 plots, lower building heights and improved building design and environmental standards – but would reserve a final decision until the full plans were available.

5746 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report: The Clerk reported that the molecatcher had caught four moles in the Playing Field. The molecatcher charged £45 plus £15 per mole so the total bill was £105. The Clerk paid the molecatcher in cash.

It was suggested that the play equipment being jet-washed to clean it up but there was a concern over the impact on the paint. Soapy water was thought to be a better option after checking with the manufacturer's recommendations.

5747 – Planning Applications: Planning Application No: 2025/0224/LBC Replacement of existing casement windows with double glazed sash windows and casement windows in former shop. Repair/replacement of the door to the former shop on a like for like basis. Elm House, Kale Street, Batcombe. The proposal sought Listed Building Consent for the retrofit of the building to improve its energy efficiency, including the replacement of the current 1970s single glazed casement windows across the front and rear elevations with more thermally efficient vacuum double-glazed alternatives and the repair/replacement of the door to the former shop on

a like for like basis. The Parish Council recommended approval as there were no objections to the proposed works.

Planning Application Updates: The tree works at Batcombe House – the felling of an Ash with Ash dieback and the crown lift of a Copper Beech – had been approved, as had the application for the felling of a Beech at The Old Barn.

5748 – Review of Schedule of Assets: An updated copy of the Schedule of Assets had been distributed with the Agenda. The new laptop and software (purchase value £706) and the grit bin at Westcombe (purchase value £221) had been added to the Schedule increasing the value of the Parish Council’s assets to £63,784. It should be noted that the values given are the purchase value with no account made of depreciation or increase in value. It was realised that the strimmer purchased by the Parish Council had not been added to the Schedule of Assets – to be added by the Clerk.

5749 – Review of Risk Management Policy and Insurance Cover: A copy of the Risk Assessment and Management document had been distributed with the Agenda. This was the same as the previous year’s document as there had been no change in the risks to the Council. The Insurance Policy was due for renewal in June and the Parish Council’s long term agreement was coming to an end. The Council was happy to consider the insurance proposed by its current insurance brokers Clear Councils Insurance without seeking a quote from alternative brokers or insurers.

5750 - Authorisation of Payments: Councillors authorised the following payments:

- £44.06 water2business – Water supply to the Playing Field for six months.
- £105.00 The Clerk – To reimburse cash paid to the molecatcher.
- £12.00 Read Agriservices Ltd – 100 tie clips for sign.

5751 – Other Business – matters of information only. The refreshments for the Annual Parish Meeting were organised. Bryony Harling offered to bring tea, coffee and milk. Jayne Cox and the Chair offered to bring cake.

A resident had written to ask if the Parish Council could discuss encouraging farmers and landowners to plant more trees and hedgerows as a means on future flood prevention. Ian Sage noted that there was a Somerset Local Nature Recovery strategy was being developed that would aim to increase the level of tree cover in the county for flood prevention and carbon capture and would work with farmers to encourage the planting of trees on their land.

The Clerk reported problems in setting up a Stripe account for the Parish Council as a parish council did not fit the business types recognised by Stripe.

Karen Slocombe reported that the Village Hall had received a £1,500 grant towards a new cooker in the Jubilee Hall and only of the conditions would be providing a Better Eating course in the Hall.

5752 - Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 2nd April 2025 at 6.45pm in the Jubilee Hall, to be followed by the Annual Parish Meeting at 7.30pm.