

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 1st July 2026 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 8.00pm.

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

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage.

5999 – Apologies for Absence: Clare Kingston and Tom Price.

6000 – Declarations of Interest: Ian Sage and Jayne Cox declared an interest in the authorisation of the Clerk's salary as relatives of the Clerk.

6001 – Public Participation: None.

6002 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 3rd June 2026 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

6003 – Matters Arising: Action Table – A copy of the Action Table from the meeting on June 3rd had been distributed to Councillors before the meeting. The Chair reported that she had written to Tim Chater suggesting that the IT Group arising from the Community Review should come to the September meeting to hear about the Wessex Internet proposal and the other groups should attend following meetings. The Chair also reported that the Staffing Committee had met to look at terms of reference for the committee and had asked the Chair to simplify example terms of reference provided by the Clerk.

Audit – the Clerk reported that the Certificate of Exemption had been e-mailed to the external auditors, PKF Littlejohn, and acknowledged. All the items required to be published under the Transparency Code had been placed on the Parish Council website. These included 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 had 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 Monday 22nd June to Friday 31st July.

6004 – Somerset Councillor's Report and Shepton Local Community Network (LCN): No reports from the Somerset Councillors had been received at the time of the meeting.

The LCN AGM would be taking place on Monday 6th July, 7-9.00pm in the Council Chamber at Shepton Mallet. Jayne Cox was unable to attend and no other Councillor was available. The Clerk to send apologies from the Parish Council.

6005 – Wessex Internet: The Clerk had met with the Senior Engagement Manager from Wessex Internet in June. Wessex Internet would be bringing ultrafast internet to Batcombe and surrounding areas in 2027. In 2024 Wessex Internet was awarded a five-year contract under the government-funded Project Gigabit programme to bring gigabit-capable broadband to hard-to-reach communities across Dorset and South Somerset and their network would reach Batcombe

at some point in the next year (progress being dependent on winter weather and other factors). Wessex Internet would be bringing full fibre broadband to rural communities, which meant a fibre optic cable going all the way to a home or business directly from the provider's network, delivering superior speeds and reliability compared to copper or partial fibre networks. They were currently at the planning stage talking to local landowners about how the network will reach Batcombe and the surrounding properties. Most of the rural network would be laid underground although some of the network in the village may use existing Openreach telegraph poles and ducting.

Wessex Internet would be holding a residents' meeting early next year to explain what they are offering, three months or so before the network was operational. It had been suggested that this would be suitable for the Annual Parish Meeting on April 7th – although they might need an earlier meeting if progress was better than expected.

Wessex Internet were based in Blandford, Dorset and offered four internet packages: Full Fibre Lite at £29 a month at 100Mbps download, 15Mbps upload and a data limit of 100GB a month for online essentials; Full Fibre 250 at £42.50 a month (250Mbps download, 125Mbps upload, unlimited data); Full Fibre 500 at £55 a month (500Mbps download, 250Mbps upload, unlimited data) for older properties with thick walls; and Full Fibre 900 at £79 a month (900Mbps download, 450Mbps upload, unlimited data) for data hungry households. There was free installation and a £49 activation fee. Residents did not have to use the full fibre connection if they do not wish to and a coil would then be left at the property boundary. Currently no other providers were using Wessex Internet's network, but this may change in the future. They offer an eighteen-month contract with no midterm price increase.

For every community connected to their network, Wessex Internet offer one Community Hub, connecting a community building for £1 a month and they would be contacting the Village Hall Trust about this. Wessex Internet would also be offering a variety of telephone packages, where residents can retain their landline number when the copper landlines are removed in a few years' time.

It was agreed to invite Wessex Internet to give a presentation at the Annual Parish Meeting on Wednesday 7th April 2027. The Clerk reported receiving an e-mail from a former resident of Batcombe now living in Gare Hill who stated that Wessex Internet provision of full fibre broadband to Gare Hill had been promised in 2026 but was now expected to be delivered in 2027.

6006 – Highways and Rights of Way: The Clerk reported that there would be a temporary 30mph speed limit on Hincombe Hill (near the telephone exchange) on Thursday 9th July to allow the upgrading of overhead power lines and on Friday 10th July Eastcombe Lane would be closed, also to allow the upgrading of overhead power lines.

Jayne Cox reported that a local farmer was blocking the lane at Lower Alham by parking vehicles across the lane. It was noted that the farmer was concerned about thefts from his farm but this was a public highway and could not be blocked. Jayne and Peter Glaisher volunteered to speak to the farmer and suggest that he put up gates to secure his farm.

Bryony Harling reported the theft of a food truck from Penny Square Barn. The Clerk was asked to ensure items on the Action Table were completed by the next meeting in September.

6007 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report: The outstanding items on the Action Table were noted. Bryony Harling to keep checking on the emptying of the litter bin over the summer. Peter Glaisher volunteered to cut the inside of the Playing Field hedges before the Annual Fete. It was noted that no request had been received from the Fete Committee for the use of the Playing Field for the Fete. The Clerk was delegated to respond to a request from the Fete

Committee with the same conditions as in the previous year including a contribution to the cost of providing the electricity.

6008 – Planning Applications: There were no planning applications to consider. However, the Clerk reported that notification had been received of an application for a lawful development certificate for works to the barn in the field opposite the track to Higher Greenscombe.

The applicants had received planning permission for the cladding of the building, along with the installation of a concrete pad and improvements to the trackway in 2021. They were arguing that this planning permission was still valid as the cladding had been put in place before the planning permission expired. They were also arguing that replacement roof and addition of internal walls do not require planning permission. As it was an application for a lawful development certificate the Parish Council was notified but not consulted. It was noted that the applicants had made two unsuccessful applications for Class Q conversion of the barn to a dwelling house.

Planning Updates: The application to remove an overhanging bough at Netherlea had been approved. The Clerk to report the installation of cabins at Churchbridge Lodge without planning permission.

6009 – Review of the Social Media Policy and the Press and Media Policy: The Social Media Policy had been updated in 2022 and the Social Media Policy and the Press and Media Policy had been reviewed in 2023. No changes were felt to be needed.

6010 - Authorisation of Payments: Councillors authorised the following payments:

Kevin Gale - £200.00 – Grass cutting in June. (Two cuts.)

HMRC - £23.19 – Income Tax and Employer's National Insurance Contribution (April)

The Clerk – £1,445.91 – Salary and expenses for 1st Quarter.

The payments to be made online with the exception of the payment of the Clerk's salary and expenses as the Clerk could not approve payments to himself. This would be made by cheque and the other bank signatories were not yet authorised to approve online payments.

The Clerk had obtained bank details for the grants authorised at the previous meeting to be paid online with the exception of the grant to Mendip Community Transport which would be paid by cheque.

The Clerk noted that Financial Regulations required payments made online to be reported to the Parish Council at the next meeting (which had not been done at the June meeting). The online payments following the May meeting were:

£34.70	News from the Parishes – Printing for the Community Review.
£99.49	Tom Price – Refreshments for the Community Review.
£227.40	Simon Pritchard – Internal Auditor's fee and expenses.
£84.00	MiJan Limited – Easy PC Accounts subscription for 2026/27.
£200.00	Kevin Gale – Grass cutting in April (2 cuts).
£713.25	Clear Insurance Management Ltd – Insurance Premium.
£220.00	T & EA Hollis – Lease of allotments field.

And those following the June meeting were:

£200.00 Kevin Gale – Grass cutting in May (2 cuts).

6011 – Other Business – matters of information only. Parish Council Laptop – The Clerk reported that the Parish Council laptop had suddenly stopped working. A local resident who did not wish to be named had got the laptop working again although there was no indication of

what the problem had been. Hopefully, the laptop would continue working well and the Clerk would ensure everything on the laptop was backed up.

Jayne Cox reported that there were issues with broken branches hanging in the trees in Coney Wood and volunteered to report the problem to the Woodland Trust.

Peter Glaisher had visited the allotments field and it was clear that no one was taking care of the communal areas and little work was being done on the remaining allotments. The grass was now too long to be mown so it was agreed to leave matters to the end of the year and then clear up the field ready to return it to the owners. In the meantime Peter would speak to the owners to keep them informed of what was happening.

6012 - Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 5th August 2026 at 8.00pm in the Old School if required to consider planning applications - otherwise Wednesday 2nd September at 8.00pm in the Old School.

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