

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 3rd June 2026 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 8.00pm.

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

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage.

5980 – Apologies for Absence: Tom Price and Jayne Cox.

5981 – Declarations of Interest: Peter Glaisher declared an interest in the grant for the maintenance of the churchyard as a member of the PCC and Ian Sage declared an interest in the grant to the Village Hall as a member of the Village Hall Trust.

5982 – Public Participation: None.

5983 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 6th May 2026 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5984 – Matters Arising: Action Table – A copy of the Action Table from the meeting on May 6th had been distributed with the Agenda and there were no matters arising that did not appear elsewhere on the Agenda.

Insurance – the Clerk reported that confirmation had been received of the renewal of the Parish Council's insurance.

5985 – Somerset Councillor's Report and Shepton Local Community Network (LCN): A report from Somerset Councillor Claire Sully had been distributed to Parish Councillors before the meeting.

The LCN AGM would be taking place on Monday 6th July, 7-9.00pm in the Council Chamber at Shepton Mallet.

5986 – Allotments: The rent for the lease of the allotments field had been paid for the final year to April 2027 and the Clerk reported that the field owners were happy with the entrance to the field that the Parish Council installed when taking on the field – so there was no need to restore the entrance to its original condition. Peter Glaisher reported that the water to the allotments field had been turned on after being turned off during the heatwave.

5987 – Community Review: The Chair to make contact with the groups set up following the Community Review and invite them to a Parish Council meeting. It was suggested that the IT/Broadband be invited first in light of the approach by Wessex Internet (see Minute 5997 below).

5988 – Highways and Rights of Way: The Clerk reported that the A359 would be closed at Wanstrow for three days from June 15th to June 17th to allow Bristol Water to connect a new supply.

5989 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report: The Cricket Club had asked if they could cut back some overhanging branches that interfered with their practice in the cricket net and had offered to do this themselves as they had some qualified landscapers in the club. The Parish Council agreed provided the Cricket Club applied for planning permission for the tree works, as the Playing Field was in the Conservation Area; those undertaking the work had public liability insurance and precautions were taken so that no children were in the Playing Field while the work was being undertaken.

One of the cricket stumps in the cricket net had been broken and the Clerk to ask if the Cricket Club could replace the broken stump with an old stump. Otherwise a new set of stumps would cost £47. Peter Glaisher volunteered to put extra dirt at the entrance to the cricket net to alleviate the trip hazard. Ian Sage was thanked for greasing the swings in the Playing Field and turning the water in the shelter on. Ian noted that the sealant around the roundabout had been removed and more was needed.

The annual inspection of the equipment in the Playing Field by RoSPA would take place in June and each year the inspector stated that the Parish Council should undertake an annual dismantling inspection of the cableway to examine the hidden sections of the cable. The Clerk noted that the internal auditor also had a cableway in his parish and his Parish Council budgeted £500 a year for the inspection of their cableway - £200 for a dismantling inspection and the rest to replace any worn parts (as this usually required a further dismantling). He recommended that a dismantling inspection was undertaken each year to ensure the Parish Council was covered by our insurance should an accident happen on the cableway. The Clerk had checked with the insurers who stated that we should follow the recommendations of the RoSPA inspector. The Clerk to check with the internal auditor to find who did their dismantling inspection.

Bryony Harling noted that the litter bin was being emptied regularly and as a result would not be replacing the “no dog poo” sign.

5990 – Planning Applications: Planning Application No: 2026/0934/TCA T1(A) – Cherry – Removal of bough at point of trunk that extends approx. 3m outwards, due to potential for failure. Netherlea, Back Lane, Batcombe. Works/Felling Trees in a CA. The Parish Council agreed to recommend approval on safety grounds.

Planning Updates: The application for various tree works at Pastoral had been approved. As had the application to fell two stems of a Himalayan Birch at Boxbush and the application to fell a Leylandii at 1 Wickham Cottages.

The Clerk had received a further response from the enforcement officer regarding the extension at Churchbridge Lodge. He had shared a photo of the extension as seen from within the property taken in 2015 which showed the extension the same as it was currently and stated that whatever work had been undertaken on the roadside wall, it would not be expedient to take action on. Regarding any cabins in the woodland, he stated that if the Parish Council submitted a report of a suspected breach of planning online, along with evidence, then it could be investigated when an officer was available. He added that currently there was a shortage of staff and a large backlog of cases waiting to be allocated. The Parish Council asked the Clerk to submit a report about the cabins.

5991 – Review of Financial Regulations: The Parish Council had adopted new Financial Regulations in June 2024 based on model Financial Regulations produced by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and then updated these in January 2026 to allow online banking.

The Clerk noted a small inconsistency in the regulations for electronic payments (section 7). Regulation 7.1 stated that the Clerk may be an authorised signatory, while regulation 7.6 stated

that “Two *Councillors who are* authorised signatories shall check the payment details against the invoices before approving each payment using the online banking system.” In the model regulations from NALC the words “Councillors who are” were optional and could be omitted.

It was agreed that the two Councillors who were bank signatures, Peter Glaisher and Bryony Harling, should be authorised to approve online payments, so that it was not just the Clerk and the Chair who approved these payments. In the meantime, regulation 7.6 was amended by removing the words “Councillors who are” so that the Clerk and Chair could continue to approve online payments.

5992 – Review of the Effectiveness of the System of Internal Control, Internal Auditor’s Report and Certificate of Exemption from a Limited Assurance Review: The Clerk reported his belief that the Council’s system of internal control was more than sufficient for a small Parish Council. The details were given in the Financial Regulations and included the budgetary process, the authorisation of all payments by the Council, the signing of cheques at Council meetings by two Councillors, the quarterly bank reconciliations and the internal audit. The internal controls for online payments had been reviewed under the previous item (minute 5991) with agreement to move to two Councillors approving online payments once they were authorised to do so.

The internal audit had been undertaken by Simon Pritchard of Moderamen Auditing, who satisfied the necessary requirements of independence of the Parish Council and competence. A copy of his Internal Audit Report as well as the completed Internal Audit form that was page 4 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) were distributed with the Agenda.

The internal auditor noted that many elements of the Parish Council’s governance, paperwork and policies were above the average standard of councils of a similar size. He did note two issues with the setting of the precept – one being that delegation of the setting of the precept to the Clerk (in case the Council cannot meet in January) was unlawful and the other is that the Minutes of the meeting in January did not actually record the final decision to set the precept.

The internal auditor had also noted that Councillors should leave the room when declaring an interest; that Minutes should be adopted at the August meeting (if held); that the Clerk was only claiming 40p a mile for travel when the national rate was 45p (since increased to 55p); and the Staffing Committee needed terms of reference.

The Parish Council accepted the Internal Audit Report and it was agreed that the Staff Committee would consider its terms of reference – the Clerk having provided potential terms of reference that would need to be modified for a smaller council.

The Clerk noted that the Parish Council’s gross annual income and expenditure were both under the £25,000 limit which meant that the Parish Council could certify itself as exempt from a limited assurance review by the External Auditor. The Chair and the Clerk then signed the Certificate of Exemption that had to be sent to the External Auditor by the end of the month.

5993 – Annual Return Section 1 – Approval of Annual Governance Statement 2025/26: Copies of Section 1 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return - the Annual Governance Statement - had been enclosed with the Agendas. Approval of the Annual Governance Statement was agreed and the Statement was signed by the Chair and the Clerk.

5994 – Annual Return Section 2 – Approval of Accounting Statements 2025/26: Copies of Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return – the Statement of Accounts – had been enclosed with the Agendas, along with a copy of the Financial Statements, considered at the previous meeting, showing how the figures in the Statement of Accounts had been derived. Approval of the Statement of Accounts was agreed and this was signed by the Chair,

having previously been signed by the Clerk as the Responsible Financial Officer. It was noted that there were significant variations (of more than 15%) in boxes 3 and 6 between the figures for last year and those for the previous year. In box 3 this was due to the Community Review grant of £4,650 in 2025/26. In box 6 this was due to the £3,835 costs of the Community Review in 2025/26 less the £767 cost of the new laptop and software in 2024/25.

5995 – Annual Grants from the Parish Council: Peter Glaisher and Ian Sage left the room while it was agreed to provide the budgeted grants of £400 to the Village Hall (£200 for the Parish Council’s meetings and £200 for committee meetings of other village organisations) and £300 to the Parochial Church Council for the maintenance of the churchyard.

It was also agreed to make grants of £110 to Citizens Advice Somerset and Mendip Community Transport. The Parish Council had the power to support the Village Hall Trust, to provide a grant for the maintenance of the churchyard and to support Citizens Advice. The grant to Mendip Community Transport was approved by a section 137 resolution.

5996 - Authorisation of Payments: Councillors authorised the following payment:

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

The payment to be made online.

The Clerk noted that the Parish Council had a reserve bank account with NatWest that earned a small amount of interest. The account had effectively been dormant for many years because of the difficulty of transferring money between the current and reserve accounts (which required two signatories on a form to be taken to a bank branch). With online banking it is relatively easy to transfer funds between the two accounts, so the Clerk asked the Council to authorise transfers between the two accounts as and when the Clerk, as Responsible Financial Officer, felt it appropriate. This was agreed.

5997 – Other Business – matters of information only. Wessex Internet – In April 2024, Wessex Internet were awarded a five-year contract under the UK Government’s Project Gigabit programme to bring gigabit-capable broadband to hard-to-reach rural communities. As part of this programme, a number of properties within the parish would be eligible to receive gigabit-capable full-fibre broadband directly to their home or business premises, including free installation funded through Project Gigabit. In addition, Wessex Internet had commercial plans to extend their full-fibre network to further properties in the area that fall outside the scope of the government contract.

Wessex Internet would have liked to give a brief 5–10 minute introduction to their work in the area at a Parish Council meeting – but unfortunately were unable to attend either the June or July meetings. Instead they would be meeting with the Clerk on June 16th and then finding a suitable date for a wider community engagement later in the year.

Show of Hands Music Festival – The Show of Hands festival which was due to take place at Gilcombe Farm on the second May bank holiday had been postponed and would now take place from 16th to 19th July 2027.

Bryony Harling reported that the gritting routes in Somerset were being reviewed and Cllr Rob Reed would be putting Batcombe’s concerns to the review. Parking at the Round House had improved as some people living there have moved out. The Clerk to write to the resident at Church Farm who left his wheelie bin in the road and to the resident at Columbine Cottage who could park closer to the wall leaving room for traffic to pass.

5998 - Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 1st July 2026 at 8.00pm in the Old School.