

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 3rd September 2025 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 8.00pm.

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

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage.

5829 – Apologies for Absence: Clare Kingston.

5830 – Declarations of Interest: None.

5831 – Public Participation: None.

5832 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesdays 2nd & 23rd July and 6th August 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5833 – Matters Arising: Action Table – A copy of the Action Table from the meeting on July 2nd had been distributed with the Agenda. Ian Sage stated that he had applied wood preservative to the seats in the Playing Field. Tom Price and Peter Glaisher volunteered to undertake the painting of the tops of the swing frames. It was noted that the Playing Field did not need to be closed as the parts that needed painting were out of the reach of children. The Clerk to investigate online banking by the next meeting.

Audit – Receipt of the Council's Certificate of Exemption had been acknowledged by the external auditors, PKF Littlejohn LLP and there was no request to examine the Parish Council's accounting records during the period when these were available to the public.

5834 – Somerset Councillor's Report and Shepton Local Community Network (LCN): A report had been received from Somerset Councillor Claire Sully and distributed to Parish Councillors.

Peter Glaisher had attended the LCN Highways Group meeting. Most of the discussion was not relevant to Batcombe focussing on the dangers of traffic on the A37, although there was also a discussion about the perception of speeding in relation to actual speeds. Collective discussion of issues would be helpful in ensuring that issues were not moved from one parish to the next one. It was noted that parishes were not aware of what Highways were doing ahead of time and it would be helpful to know when they are doing something in a parish.

5835 – Footpaths and Highways: Grit bins – The Clerk to inform Somerset Highways that there were two grit bins in Batcombe. One on Hincombe Hill was empty. The other was by the Westcombe War Memorial and was full. It was agreed that the Hincombe Hill grit bin should be moved near to the Round House, location to be decided, and be replaced with a larger bin.

Spargrove Footpath – Tom Price stated that there was no update on the tree blocking the Spargrove footpath.

Strimmer – Tom Price had obtained a quote for £51.99 for a second helmet with visor and ear defenders which would allow a second person to use the strimmer. It was agreed to accept the

quote and Tom agreed to purchase the helmet. Tom would also investigate online training for working on or near the highway.

5836 – Community Review: The Community Review Survey had been launched with a closing date of September 15th. Tom Price reported that by the date of the meeting only 15% of residents had completed the online survey. The Steering Group would be encouraging and helping residents to complete the survey before the deadline.

5837 – Allotments: The Clerk reported that one existing allotment holder wished to take on a additional allotment and would be attending the October Parish Council meeting when the future of the allotments would be discussed. Peter Glaisher reported that the allotment holder with three allotments and who did most of the work on the communal areas wished to give up his allotments in November. If the Parish Council decided not to continue with the allotments, existing allotment holders would be given 12 months' notice in October and this would leave the Parish Council six months to restore the field to its original condition before the lease came to an end in May 2027.

5838 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report: Annual Safety Inspection – A copy of the report of the RoSPA safety inspection had been distributed to Parish Councillors. Most items were of low/medium risk with the actual risk of items being the same or slightly higher than the innate risk for that type of item. The exception was the cableway where the inspector was unable to inspect the cable attachments as they are covered. He recommended an annual inspection of the cable attachments, which would involve dismantling the cableway. The Clerk to contact the cableway suppliers to find out the cost on an inspection and whether they felt it was necessary. The inspection also noted that the wetpour safety surfacing was shrinking back from the roundabout and may present a trip hazard. The Clerk to investigate the cost of a wetpour repair kit to fill the gap. Additional dirt was needed to remove the trip hazard at the entrance to the cricket net.

Peter Glaisher and Tom Price were thanked for cutting the inside of the Playing Field hedge before the Fete. It was noted that John Wiltshire had cut the outside of the Playing Field hedge along Vinings Hill without charging and the Clerk was asked to write and thank him. It was noted that he had been unable to cut the hedge along the lay-by because of parked cars and it was hoped he would return and do this.

The Fete Committee had provided written confirmation that the PCC's insurers were happy to provide insurance cover for the Village Fete on the basis that a member of the PCC was on the Fete Committee - provided that risk assessments were made and no dangerous activities undertaken. It was suggested that next year the Parish Council should ask for a copy of the risk assessments to be provided before the Fete. The Chair had inspected the Playing Field after the Fete and found it in good condition with just a small amount of litter, although it was noted that the Playing Field had been opened before the inspection and children were already using the cableway.

The tap that had been installed in the shelter for the Fete was dripping and Ian Sage would remove it. The surface of the Playing Field was very uneven where molehills and moleruns had collapsed. It was agreed to ask the Cricket Club if they could roll the Playing Field with their roller and Tom Price volunteered to speak to them.

5839 – Planning Applications: There were no planning applications to consider.

Planning Updates: The application for the erection of an outbuilding in the rear garden of Columbine Cottage had been approved; as had the application for the erection of six new-build dwellings to replace the nine dwellings approved under prior approval at Beeches Farm. Listed Building Consent had been granted for the replacement of the existing casement windows with

double glazed sash windows at Elm House and the replacement of the casement windows and repair of the door in the former shop there. The reduction of the Birch trees at Top O' Hollow had been approved; as had the application for a detached double garage at Beeches Farm. And the application to fell the Ash tree at Southview had also been approved.

5840 – Review of the Parish Council's Complaints Procedure: A copy of the Council's Code of Practice was available to be downloaded from the Parish Council website. This had last been amended in 2011 and was based on a model produced by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). The procedure was only for complaints about the actions of the Parish Council as a body. Complaints about the Clerk should be dealt with by the Staffing Committee in accordance with the Clerk's Contract of Employment; and complaints against individual Councillors for breaches of the Council's Code of Conduct should be made to the Somerset Council's Monitoring Officer. It was agreed that there was no need to amend the current Complaints Procedure.

5841 – Bank Reconciliation and Budget Update: The bank reconciliation for the first quarter had been checked by the Chair prior to the meeting.

A budget update had been distributed with the Agendas. This had been produced by the new accounting software, Easy PC Accounts, and so was different to previous years' budget updates. Instead of a projection for the year ahead there was a comparison between the budget for period being considered and actual payments and receipts with a calculation of the variance between them. There was also a second comparison between the budget and the actual figures for the year to date – although as this is the first period the figures were the same. For the budget comparison the software required entering which month or months the budgeted figures would be paid or received. This meant that some variances were just because amounts were paid or received in a different month to that expected.

The report shows that the precept was £500 more than the original figure proposed; the VAT repayment was £47 less than expected when the budget was produced; and the Community Review grant of £4,650 was not included in the budget.

The Playing Field grass cutting was £50 more than budgeted for the period due to a month with three cuts. Playing Field maintenance budget was £244 below budget as only £6 was spent in the period and the cost of the electricity supply was less than budgeted to date.

The Clerk's salary was less than budgeted to date but there would be a back dated increase in his salary later in the year. The Clerk's expenses were less than budgeted. The insurance premium was higher than budgeted as there was a significant increase at the end of the three-year agreement. The variation in Affiliation Fees was because they were budgeted to be paid in a later month. The website fee appeared more than budgeted because the budget had a monthly figure but the fees are actually paid quarterly.

The Grants should have been budgeted at £720 which was the amount donated. Other expenses so far were as budgeted. Quotes to be obtained for the cutting of the inside of the allotments field hedge.

On the basis of preparing the accounts to date and the budget report, the Clerk recommended continuing with Easy PC Accounts as the Parish Council's accounting software. It would cost £78 a year (which was not included in the budget) when the three-month trial period ended.

5841 - Authorisation of Payments: Councillors authorised the following payment:

£190.00 Kevin Gale – Grass cutting in the Playing Field (two cuts in August).

5842 – Other Business – matters of information only. The crime report for July showed no crimes in Batcombe, compared to five crimes reported in June.

It was reported that a tree was down at the bottom of Fry's Lane.

5843 - Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 1st October 2025 at 8.00pm in the Old School, Batcombe.

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