

# BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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## Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2026 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 7.30pm.

**Present - Councillors:** Janet Jones – Chair, Jayne Cox, Peter Glaisher, Clare Kingston, Tom Price and Ian Sage.

**Also Present:** The Clerk – Rob Sage.

**5916 – Apologies for Absence:** Bryony Harling and Rob Reed – Somerset Councillor.

**5917 – Declarations of Interest:** None.

**5918 – Public Participation:** None.

**5919 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2026** were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**5920 – Matters Arising:** Action Table – A copy of the Action Table from the meeting on January 7<sup>th</sup> had been distributed with the Agenda. There was nothing to report that did not appear later on the Agenda.

**5921 – 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.

No one had been able to attend the online LCN meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2026 and the Agenda had not seemed very relevant to Batcombe.

**5922 – Highways and Rights of Way:** The Parish Council had no objection to the application by the developer to call the new road on the development at Beeches Farm Woodland View.

The Ramblers Association had requested feedback from the Parish Council on potential footpaths in Batcombe to be added to the definitive map. The cutoff date for adding Rights of Way to the definitive map was January 1<sup>st</sup> 2031 and although the Government had stated that they would repeal this date, they have not yet done so as it required primary legislation.

The Ramblers have found evidence from the 1910 Inland Revenue Census for the following paths (with their reference numbers): 84157- runs from Higher Alham to Brickhouse Farm, Wanstrow (all but the start outside the parish); 84277 – runs directly from Mill Farm to Batcombe Vale (rather than following the river); 84325 – runs from the ford at Lower Alham, following tracks through the grounds of Westcombe House to Westcombe Lodge; 84846 – runs from Lodge Farm to the Lodge road close to the Highlands (a more direct route to Lodge Farm from Batcombe); 85613 – runs from the entrance to Valley View Farm, south of Hincombe Hill before joining the road again just below the junction with the A359; 85786 – runs from Beeches Farm to the top of Burts Hill on the A359. They have also suggested the following possible footpaths for which they don’t have documentary evidence: 83787 – runs from halfway down Bailey’s Lane to Westcombe; 84132 – runs from halfway down Bailey’s Lane to Batcombe Vale; 85066 – runs from Back Lane to Linch Lane parallel to Kale Street.

The Parish Council was not aware that any of these paths were regularly walked and as they were not official footpaths there was no access to most of them. The exceptions were 84325 where horse riders had permission from the landowner to use tracks through the grounds of what was Westcombe House and 85066 which is used by some of the residents of Kale Street to access the top of the gardens. The Clerk to respond to the Ramblers and to put a note about these historic paths in the parish magazine and on the Parish Council website.

Tom Price reported that the Rights of Ways had begun replacing gates to footpaths and there was now a kissing gate at Home Farm at the start of the footpath to Saite Lane.

**5923 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report:** The litter bin outside the Playing Field had been emptied and Bryony Harling had replaced the sign on the bin with a sticker that said no dog poo bags to be placed in the bin. The sticker had since been removed and Bryony would reattach it. A note had been placed in the parish magazine stating that the bin would be removed if it continued to be abused and filled with domestic waste and dog poo bags.

The molecatcher had caught two moles in the Playing Field and was paid £75 in cash to be reimbursed to the Clerk.

**5924 – Planning Applications:** There were no planning applications to consider.

**Planning Updates:** Approval had been given for the felling of the Medlar tree at Strawberry Cottage.

**5925 – Review of Standing Orders:** The Parish Council is required to review its Standing Orders annually. New Standing Orders, which can be downloaded from the Parish Council website, were adopted in February 2022, based on model Standing Orders provided by the National Association of Local Councils. No amendment to these Standing Orders was considered necessary.

**5926 – Annual Parish Meeting:** The Annual Parish Meeting would take place in the Jubilee Hall on Wednesday April 1<sup>st</sup>. Our MP Anna Sabine was happy to attend and be part of a question time panel as were our Somerset Councillors, Claire Sully and Rob Reed. The Chair would chair the panel and ensure no one spoke for too long. The following timetable for the meeting was agreed: 7.30pm refreshments; 7.45pm usual business; 8.15-9.00pm Question Time.

**5927 – Bank Reconciliation and Budget Update for Year Ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026:** The bank reconciliation for the third quarter had been checked by the Chair and was reported to the meeting.

A Budget Update for the third quarter had been distributed with the Agendas. As noted previously this consisted of a comparison between the budget for the period being considered and actual payments and receipts and a calculation of the variance between them; with a second comparison between the budget and the actual figures for the year to date.

Receipts during the period were a small amount of interest; allotments rent, which was significantly less than budgeted although there should be a further £70 to come; and Miscellaneous Receipts which consists of the £100 electricity contribution from the Fete committee and £142.50 in voluntary accommodation levies from the Three Horseshoes. The latter was not included in the budget, while the electricity contribution was received later than expected. Overall Total Receipts were £5,039 up on the year to date, mainly due to the Community Review Grant which had not been included in the budget.

The Playing Field grass cutting was £30 under budget for the period but exactly as budgeted for the year to date. Playing Field maintenance budget was £400 below budget for the year to date,

with £156 having been spent in the last quarter (on the roller) and a further £75 spent on the molecatcher this quarter. The cost of the electricity supply was less than budgeted to date but the cost of the water supply was more than budgeted.

The Clerk's salary was slightly more than budgeted in the quarter due to a back dated payment in October but was slightly less than budgeted in the year to date. The Clerk's expenses are also slightly less than budgeted in the year to date. The National Insurance contribution was also less than budgeted, but there was an increase in the data protection registration fee which means that it is more than budgeted.

£114 was spent on a second helmet for the strimmer which was roughly what was budgeted for strimmer expenses. Miscellaneous Payments were the purchase of the grit bin and sealant for the roundabout which were not budgeted. There was also the contribution to the prize for taking part in Community Review which was not budgeted.

Total Payments are £1,456 over budget for the year to date, but this was due to the payments for the Community Review which are covered by the grant received. Without the cost of the Community Review Total Payments would be under budget.

**5928 - Authorisation of Payments:** Councillors authorised the following payments:

- £75.00 The Clerk – Reimburse £75 cash paid to molecatcher.
- £6.78 Bryony Harling – Reimburse cost of sticker for litter bin.
- £47.29 water2business – Water supply to Playing Field.

The reimbursement to the Clerk were paid by cheque as the Clerk could not approve a payment to himself. The remaining payments to be made online.

Councillors authorised the following payment retrospectively as payment had been required by January 23<sup>rd</sup>:

£2010.00 Thrive (Community Council for Somerset) – 2<sup>nd</sup> 50% of Community Review cost. Thrive was now VAT registered which was why the first 50% of the cost was £1,675 and the second 50% was £2,010. However, the Parish Council would be able to claim back the £335 in VAT on the second 50%.

In line with the new Financial Regulations, the Clerk reported that the following payments had been made by online bank transfer since the last meeting after being approved by the Clerk and the Chair:

- £40.84 HMRC – Income tax (£19.80) and Employer's NIC (£21.07) for 2nd Quarter.
- £45.90 News from the Parishes – Photocopying in 2025 (1,030 black copies; 47 colour).
- £2010.00 Thrive (Community Council for Somerset) – 2<sup>nd</sup> 50% of Community Review cost.

**5929 – Other Business** – matters of information only. There was no other business to consider.

**5930 - Date and Time of Next Meeting:** Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2026 at 7.30pm in the Old School, Batcombe.