BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage **Tel: 01749 850934**
e-mail: clerk@batcombe-parish-council-somerset.org.uk

Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 7th October 2026 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 8.00pm.

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

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage; and four members of the public.

6034 – Apologies for Absence: Jayne Cox and Clare Kingston.

6035 – Declarations of Interest: Ian Sage declared an interest in the approval of the Clerk's salary and the authorisation of the payment of that salary as a relative of the Clerk. Tom Price declared an interest in the item on the expenditure of the Community Review funds as a member of the Review steering group. The Councillors present indicated that they did not want their home addresses published with their Register of Interests.

6036 – Public Participation: None.

6037 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 2nd September 2026 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

6038 – Planning Applications:

Planning Application No: 2026/1807/HSE Retrospective application for works to repair and re-waterproof the existing slate roof. Jackdaw Cottage, Kale Street, Batcombe – Householder Application.

Planning Application No: 2026/1808/LBC Retrospective application for works to repair and re-waterproof the existing slate roof, removal of non-original ground floor slabs and partial internal render removal. Jackdaw Cottage, Kale Street, Batcombe – Listed Building Consent.

The applicants explained that when bought it the cottage roof was leaking. They had thought it permissible to repair the leaks without planning permission but once work began they discovered asbestos in the roof, the roof timbers had woodworm and the slate tiles were in a poor condition and unable to be reused. They had done everything they could to preserve the historic fabric of the building and no timbers were removed but were doubled up to support the roof. Inspections needed to resolve the damp problem had involved removing 1960's red floor tiles and some crumbling plaster had been removed. The Parish Council decided to recommend approval as there were no concerns with the work undertaken.

Planning Updates: Two tree applications had been received since the last meeting. One to fell a Blue Cedar at Elm House on Kale Street and replace with a Lime tree. The other to crown thin by 15% a Lebanese Cedar at Batcombe House. Parish Councillors were consulted on both applications and, as no comments were received, the Clerk recommended approval of both applications under his delegated authority to respond to tree applications.

The Chair noted that the planning application for Boxbush Farmhouse was likely to come back to the Parish Council again as the applicant had indicated that the Conservation Officer wanted a small change made to the plans.

DRAFT

6039 – Community Review: The Clerk reported that the grant received for the Community Review was £4,650. £3,500 was spent on the Community Review survey and £299.49 on the concluding evening meeting, leaving £850.51 in remaining funds. [*Post meeting correction:- £815.81 after printing costs of £34.70.*] The grant administrator, the Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC), had stated that this money needed to be spent by mid-October. The Friends of the River Alham (FoRA), a subcommittee of the Environment Group set up following the Community Review, had requested that this money be spent on river testing kits. Tom Price had indicated that SALC were happy with the money being spent on this and a report from FoRA had been distributed to Parish Councillors. Brue Crew, the equivalent of FoRA for the River Brue had provided an invoice for providing 4 river testing kits at a cost of £808.46. SALC had informed Tom that the remaining money could be retained by the Parish Council to be allocated for community engagement by minuted agreement of the Council.

Paul Harrison, a member of FoRA, explained that the kits would test for riverfly in the river and was part of a nationwide project to monitor the health of our rivers. FoRA would need to find suitable sites where the river bed was gravel and would then contact landowners for permission to set up a test site. The river would be tested monthly for a year to assess the level of life in the river. Everyone who signed up to do the testing would get training.

Ian Sage noted that the local farmers were concerned that this could result in them being blamed for poor water quality in the river. It was noted that the intention was to facilitate the national project rather than point fingers locally. Given the deadline for spending the money and that no alternative proposals had been put forward, it was agreed to spend the remaining grant money on the riverfly testing kits. The Chair stated that good communication would be needed to inform landowners about the project and where the money had come from. Paul Harrison stated that he would be putting an article in the parish magazine. He added that FoRA were also hoping to deal with the Himalayan Balsam growing on the river banks.

6040 – Voluntary Accommodation Levy: Tom Price had reported that the Three Horseshoes would shortly be paying a further £295 collected from the voluntary contributions made by people staying there. This was in addition to the £142.50 received in the previous year and brought the total to £437.50.

Tom proposed that "the Parish Council advertise the source of funds and invite submissions for consideration. We would need to draft some sort of guidance/information/policy on what projects might be supported. The funds from the pub are donated on the proviso that they support community improvement for parishioners and visitors to the parish." A draft form that could be used for applications to the funds had been distributed to Parish Councillors.

The Parish Council agreed the proposal in principle and a small group consisting of the Chair, Tom Price and Bryony Harling was asked to produce a draft policy for consideration at the next meeting.

6041 – Highways and Rights of Way: Tom Price reported that the Rights of Way Officer was able to support and fund improvements to the Rights of Way network in the parish. Any stiles, gates, etc that needed attention should be reported to Tom. It was noted that the gate to the footpath opposite Church Farm was padlocked. Tom to report this to the Rights of Way Officer.

The Clerk reported that the Lodge road would be closed at Beeches Farm for 10 hours on November 5th from 7.00am to replace an overhead conductor.

Tom Price stated that s.130(6) of the Highways Act 1980 had been brought to his attention as a means to expedite action regarding the fallen tree and damaged bridges issue on the Spargrove footpath. If the Parish Council makes a representation about a blocked right of way under s.130(6) to the Somerset Council, the Somerset Council is obliged to take action. Apparently Evercreech Parish Council have used this process to resolve a longstanding issue in their parish.

DRAFT

The Clerk to ask Evercreech Parish Council about this and place the matter on the next month's Agenda.

Tom Price reported that the Somerset Council bridge team had inspected the bridge by Mill Farm.

6042 – Matters Arising from the Minutes: Action Table – Bryony Harling to report the road closed signs left at Eastcombe; the Clerk to reported the cabins built at Churchbridge Lodge outside the curtilage of the dwelling; the Clerk to chase Somerset Highways on the repair of the barrier on Hincombe Hill; the wheelie bin left in the road outside Church Farm had been removed; Peter Glaisher to suggest that contractors at Kings Hayes to use the glebe field for parking rather than the layby outside the Playing Field; Ian Sage suggested that the grit bin removed from Hincombe Hill be placed on Millards Hill to give one route from the village where grit was available – this was agreed; the Clerk to produce an application for relisting the Three Horseshoes as an Asset of Community Value; the Clerk to organise the authorisation of online payments by Bryony Harling and Peter Glaisher; parking outside Columbine Cottage had improved.

6043 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report: Ian Sage had purchased a new set of stumps for the cricket net at a cost of £29.99 and would install these.

Ian felt that it was possible to adjust the gap on the roundabout that had been noted in the annual safety inspection. This would involve removing one section of the roundabout at a time and taking it away to shave a piece off. As this would leave a hole in the roundabout, Ian was working on the possibility of replacing the missing piece with a wooden cover while it was being worked on and would report back to the Parish Council.

Ian had replaced the broken tap in the shelter with a stopper, so the water fountain could be used. It was agreed to charge the Fete Committee £10 for a new tap.

The Clerk to investigate the dismantling inspection of the cableway as recommended in the annual safety inspection.

It was noted that there was a hole in the surface of the Playing Field.

Ian Sage left the meeting at this point.

6044 – 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. Notes from the LCN AGM and a copy of the LCN Annual Report had also been distributed to Parish Councillors.

6045 – Emergency Plan: An updated version of the Parish Emergency Plan had been distributed to Parish Councillors with updated e-mails, website addresses and telephone numbers. It was noted that distribution of the Emergency Plan was restricted because it included personal details of those who had volunteered to assist in an emergency. The effectiveness of the Emergency Plan was questioned given that it had not been used during the Covid pandemic and volunteers tended just to get on and help without the need for co-ordination. It was agreed to keep the Emergency Plan in place but not to update the list of volunteers.

Councillors indicated difficulty in setting up their dedicated Parish Council e-mails, particularly on mobile phones.

6046 – Clerk's Salary for 2026/27: The Clerk reported that the National Joint Council for Local Government Services had reached agreement on new pay scales for 2026/27. The agreement consisted of an increase of 3.3% across all pay scales up SCP 43 (pro rata for part-

DRAFT

time employees). This would mean the Clerk's salary (on SCP 12) increasing from £14.82 an hour to £15.31 an hour backdated to April 2026. The National Association of Local Councils recommended that these salary scales are paid to all Clerks with the standard contract of employment and the Parish Council agreed the increase in the Clerk's salary, which was in line with the Clerk's Contract of Employment.

6047 - Authorisation of Payments: Councillors authorised the following payments:

Kevin Gale - £300.00 – Grass cutting in September. (Three cuts.)

BrueCREW – £808.46 – Four river testing kits (from Community Review grant).

H J Sage & Son – £29.99 – Cricket stumps for Playing Field (purchased by Ian Sage).

The Clerk – £1,507.69 – The Clerk – Salary and expenses for 2nd Quarter.

HMRC – £6.99 – Employer's NIC (£14.79) less Credits resulting from a change in the Clerk's tax code (£7.80) for 2nd Quarter.

The payments to be made online except the Clerk's salary and expenses to be paid by cheque as the Clerk cannot approve payments to himself.

Financial Regulations required payments made online to be reported to the Parish Council at the next meeting. The online payments following the September meeting were:

Kevin Gale - £100.00 – Grass cutting in August. (One cut.)

Playsafety Limited - £118.80 – Playing Field Safety Inspection.

For some reason the July payment to HMRC was not made and this was not discovered until the HMRC website was checked to determine the October payment. The Parish Council has been charged 34p interest for the overdue payment, which has now been made online:

HMRC – £23.53 – Employer's NIC plus Income Tax for 1st Quarter plus 34p interest.

6048 – Other Business – matters of information only. Volunteer – A local resident had asked if his son could do voluntary work for the Parish Council as part of his Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award. He was willing to help maintain the War Memorial Garden and do litter picking. The Parish Council were happy for him to do voluntary work provided it was not work on the highway as this was not covered by the Parish Council's insurance. Tom Price volunteered to deal with the paperwork needed for the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme.

The Parish Council had been copied into a complaint made to Woodshedding Brewery and Westcombe Dairy about noise and parking issues in Westcombe resulting from events at the taproom. It was agreed to check what the licence for the taproom allowed and consider the issues at the next meeting.

Peter Glaisher asked that the allotment holders be contacted to ask them to tidy up their allotments and remove personal items when the allotment tenancies come to an end at the end of the month.

Peter Glaisher noted that there was a dead tree in the War Memorial Garden and asked if planning permission was needed to remove it – given the garden was in the Conservation Area. Tom Price volunteered to organise the tidying up of the War Memorial Garden before Remembrance Sunday.

6049 - Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 4th November at **7.30pm** in the Old School.

DRAFT