

# BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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## **You are Summoned to the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council to be held on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> June 2025 at 8.00pm in the Old School, Batcombe**

*Members are reminded that the Council has a general duty to consider the following matters in the exercise of any of its functions: Equal Opportunities (race, gender, sexual orientation, marital status and any disability), Crime & Disorder, Health & Safety and Human Rights.*

### **Agenda**

**1. Apologies and Acceptance of Reasons for Absence**

*This is necessary as any member who is absent for six months, without the Council accepting their reasons for absence, automatically loses their seat on the Council.*

**2. Declarations of Interest**

*It is the Councillors' responsibility to declare any interests they may have in any item on the Agenda. If you are uncertain please ask the Clerk before the meeting.*

**3. Public Participation – Open village meeting for fifteen minutes for any member of the public to raise any issue relevant to Batcombe Parish**

*The Chairman can invite members of the public to speak at this or at any other appropriate point in the meeting.*

**4. Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2025** to be agreed and signed.  
*Enclosed/attached.*

**5. Matters Arising** – information updates only.

*Action Table – A copy of the Action Table from the meeting on May 7<sup>th</sup> is attached/enclosed for the Parish Council to check progress on the actions listed.*

**6. Somerset Councillors' Reports and the Shepton Local Community Network**

*An opportunity for the Somerset Councillors to report on matters relevant to the parish, either in person or in writing.*

*The latest meeting of the Shepton Local Community Network (LCN) took place on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> May in the Council Chamber at Shepton Mallet. Jayne Cox to report on the meeting.*

**7. Community Review**

*Tom Price to report on progress with the Community Review. The launch meeting will take place in the Jubilee Hall on Saturday June 7<sup>th</sup> at 6.00pm.*

**8. Footpaths and Highways**

*Tom Price to update with progress on the Spargrove footpath.*

## **9. Playground - Maintenance Report**

*The annual inspection of the Playing Field by RoSPA should take place in June but we have not yet received confirmation of this.*

## **10. Planning Applications**

Planning Application 2025/0876/FUL – Erection of 6 new-build dwellings to replace the 9 dwellings approved under prior approval consent 2024/1765/PAA.

Beeches Farm Wanstrow Shepton Mallet Somerset BA4 6BZ – Full Application.

*This is the new build application at Beeches Farm. Plans can be downloaded from the planning website: [2025/0876/FUL | Erection of 6 new-build dwellings to replace the 9 dwellings approved under prior approval consent 2024/1765/PAA | Beeches Farm Cockpit Lane Batcombe Shepton Mallet Somerset BA4 6BZ](#)*

Planning Application 2025/0938/TCA – T1 - Ash - Reduce end-weight of eastern lateral limbs by 20-25% (up to 2m). Thin crown by 10% to decrease crown loading and wind-sail. Maintain a balanced form. Brook House, Batcombe, Shepton Mallet, Somerset – Works/Felling Trees in a CA.

*The Ash tree is on land below Wickham Cottages. A sketch plan of the location can be downloaded from the planning website: [2025/0938/TCA | T1 - Ash - Reduce end-weight of eastern lateral limbs by 20-25% \(Up to 2m\). Thin crown by 10% to decrease crown loading and wind-sail. Maintain a balanced form. | Brook House Frys Lane To Mill Lane Batcombe Shepton Mallet Somerset BA4 6HD](#)*

**Planning Application Updates.** *The concern over the building works at Churchbridge Lodge has been reported to Planning Enforcement.*

## **11. Review of Financial Regulations and Consideration of Online Banking**

*The Parish Council's Financial Regulations need to be reviewed annually. However, the Parish Council adopted new Financial Regulations last year based on model Financial Regulations produced by the National Association of Local Councils. It is therefore unlikely that the Financial Regulations need amending this year. A copy of the Financial Regulations can be downloaded from the Parish Council Documents on the Parish Council website [Batcombe Parish Council Somerset - Parish Council Documents](#) if Councillors wish to examine them.*

*Tom Price suggested that the Parish Council consider adopting online banking. Our bank, NatWest, provides an online banking service known as Bankline Lite for Community Bank Accounts. We would need to check that the Parish Council was a Community Bank Account as the online service for Business Accounts comes with monthly fees. Bankline Lite requires a limit of four signatories on the account and we currently have five signatories – the Clerk, the Chair, the Vice Chairman, Bryony Harling and Clare Kingston. We would therefore need to agree a new bank mandate with one less signatory.*

*Online banking would still require authorisation at Parish Council meetings, and two signatories would then authorise the payment online. Financial Regulations would need to be revised if the Parish Council adopted online banking.*

## **12. Review of the Effectiveness of the System of Internal Control, Internal Auditor's Report and Certificate of Exemption from a Limited Assurance Review**

*Our Financial Regulations (1.5) require a review of the effectiveness of our system of internal control before approving the Annual Governance Statement which forms part of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (see below). I believe our system of internal control to be more than sufficient for a small Parish Council. The details are given in the Financial Regulations. These include the budgetary process, the authorisation of all payments by the Council, the signing of cheques by two Councillors, who have to initial the cheque stubs and invoices, the quarterly bank reconciliations and the requirement for an internal audit.*

*Our internal audit has been undertaken by Griff Williams, who satisfies the necessary requirements of independence of the Parish Council and competence. A copy of the completed Internal Audit Report is enclosed – page 4 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR). The Parish Council needs to accept the Internal Audit Report before it can approve the Annual Governance Statement and the Accounting Statements (see next two items).*

*Parish Councils, whose income and expenditure are both less than £25,000, do not have to send the Annual Return to the external auditor provided they send a certificate of exemption (copy enclosed) signed at this meeting and publish the Annual Return on their website by July 1<sup>st</sup>.*

### **13. Annual Return Section 1 – Approval of Annual Governance Statement 2024/25**

*Section 1 of the AGAR is the Annual Governance Statement (page 5 of the enclosed Annual Return). This has to be approved by the Council before the Council approves the Accounting Statements with a separate Minute reference. I believe the Council can agree all eight statements, but the Council can only do this once the Internal Audit Report has been considered.*

*Note: Statement 4 - The Parish Council's accounts have to be available for public inspection for 30 working days that include the first ten working days in July.*

### **14. Annual Return Section 2 – Approval of Accounting Statements 2024/25**

*Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is the Statement of Accounts (page 6 of the enclosed Annual Return) which has to be approved by the Council. The attached Financial Statements for last year show how the figures in the Statement of Accounts have been derived – the circled numbers refer to the boxes in the Statement of Accounts. There are significant variations (more than 15%) in boxes 3 and 6 between the figures for last year and those for the previous year. In box 3 this is due to the VAT refund of £1,003 in 2023/24 (£166 in 2024/25) and the contributions for the Coronation mugs in 2023/24 (none in 2024/25). In box 6 this is due to the costs in 2024/25 of the new laptop and software and the £500 grant towards the church clock (with no equivalent costs in 2023/24).*

*The Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities requires that signed copies of the Statement of Accounts, the Annual Governance Statement and the Internal Auditor's Report have to be published on the Parish Council website no later than June 30<sup>th</sup>, along with a bank reconciliation and details of all items of expenditure over £100 and any land assets.*

### **15. Annual Grants from the Parish Council**

*The Parish Council has budgeted for a grant of £400 to the Village Hall (£200 for our own meetings and £200 for committee meetings of other village organisations); for a grant of £300 to the Parochial Church Council for the maintenance of the churchyard and £220 for smaller grants to charities (increased from £200 last year). For several years the Council has given two grants of £100 to Mendip Community Transport and Mendip Citizens Advice Bureau (now Citizens Advice Somerset). In the past we have also supported Victim Support Somerset; Mendip RELATE; the Bruton Carers Group; St Margaret's Somerset Hospice and Somerset Art Works; and we have received requests from Age UK Somerset.*

*The Council has the power to support the Village Hall Trust [Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, section 19], to help maintain the churchyard [Open Spaces Act 1906, sections 9 & 10], and to support the Citizens Advice Bureau [Local Government Act 1972, section 142], but grants to other charities must be made by a specific resolution under the section 137 power, which allows the Council to spend a limited sum on items in the interest of parishioners which it has no specific power to support [Local Government Act 1972, section 137].*

### **16. Authorisation of Payment**

*Kevin Gale - £??0.00 – Grass cutting in May. (Invoice not yet received.)*

*Plus any grants approved under item 15 above.*

**17. Other Business** – matters of information only.

*None at present.*

**18. Date of Next Meeting** - Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2025 at 8.00pm in the Old School.

*Rob Sage*

Rob Sage – Clerk

28<sup>th</sup> May 2025