

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 4th June 2025 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 8.00pm.

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

Also Present: The Clerk and one member of the public.

5787 – Apologies for Absence and Acceptance of Reasons for Absence: None.

5788 – Declarations of Interest: Peter Glaisher declared an interest in the allocation of grants as a member of the Parochial Church Council and Jayne Cox declared an interest in the same item as a Village Hall Trustee.

5789 – Public Participation: None.

5790 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 7th May 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5791 – Matters Arising: Allotments – The Clerk reported that the allotment holder with two allotments would be giving up her allotments in November. Peter Glaisher reported that nothing had come of the person in Lamyatt interested in an allotment but that the allotment holder with three allotments would only be giving up one in November. There might be someone else interested in an allotment. The future of the allotments to be discussed in October.

Action Table – Ian Sage stated that he had not been able to do the Playing Field items but intended to do them in June.

5792 – Somerset Councillor's Report and Shepton Local Community Network (LCN): A report had been received from Claire Sully and distributed to Parish Councillors.

Jayne Cox had attended the LCN meeting on May 13th in Shepton Mallet, when there had been a number of technical problems and a Service Manager from Adult Social Care had talked about their work. There had been a Highways Group meeting on May 29th but Peter Glaisher had not been informed about this and would chase up why this was. The next LCN meeting would be held on July 7th at 7.00pm and was the AGM. Shepton Hospital would be discussed at the meeting.

5793 – Community Review: Tom Price reported that the Marketing and Communication Plan and the logo for the Review had been submitted to the Community Council. The launch event for the Community Review would take place on Saturday June 7th at 6.00pm when the aim was to get people talking about what they wanted in the Review.

5794 – Footpaths and Highways: Spargrove Footpath – Tom Price had chased up the Rights of Way department at the Somerset Council. They had assessed the situation and would update Tom with the action to be taken.

5795 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report: The Clerk reported that he had not contacted the molecatcher as mole activity in the Playing Field had eased off and it was decided to leave off taking action for the time being. The Clerk reported that the water fountain in the Playing Field was running continually and so he had turned off the water. Ian Sage volunteered to look at the water fountain to see if it could be repaired or needed replacing.

Tom Price and Peter Glaisher volunteered to cut the inside of the Playing Field hedge before the Annual Fete at the end of August. The annual inspection by RoSPA should be taking place in June.

5796 – 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. A letter expressing concerns about the new build from the neighbour at Batcombe Lodge was read to the Parish Council. The Parish Council felt that the new builds were an improvement on the Class Q barn conversions and that there were no planning reasons to object to the new build dwellings. It was noted that a Section 106 agreement was not applied when there were under 9 dwellings. It was felt that there should be a restriction on any development outside of the immediate curtilage of each house and particularly on the meadow area that was part of the landscaping. The Parish Council recommended approval with the condition on further development.

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 was on land below Wickham Cottages. The Parish Council had no objections to the proposed tree works.

Planning Application Updates: The concern over the building works at Churchbridge Lodge had been reported to Planning Enforcement and acknowledged. Notification of a planning application for an outbuilding at Columbine Cottage had been received and would be considered at the next meeting.

5797 – Review of Financial Regulations and Consideration of Online Banking: The Council's Financial Regulations should be reviewed annually. However, as the current Regulations had been adopted a year ago, based on model Financial Regulations provided by the National Association of Local Councils it was not felt that the Financial Regulations needed amending.

Tom Price suggested that the Parish Council consider adopting online banking. The Clerk noted that the Council's bank, NatWest, provided an online banking service known as Bankline Lite for Community Bank Accounts. The Clerk to check that the Parish Council's account was a Community Bank Account as the online service for Business Accounts comes with monthly fees. Bankline Lite required a limit of four signatories on the account and as the Council currently had five signatories Clare Kingston volunteered to cease being a 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.

5798 – 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, who have to initial the cheque stubs and invoices, the quarterly bank reconciliations and the internal audit.

Griff Williams was thanked for undertaking the role of Internal Auditor. Copies of the Internal Auditor's Report had been distributed to Councillors before the meeting and the Internal Auditor had no recommendations to make to the 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.

5799 – Annual Return Section 1 – Approval of Annual Governance Statement 2024/25:

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.

5800 – Annual Return Section 2 – Approval of Accounting Statements 2024/25:

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 VAT refund of £1,003 in 2023/24 (£166 in 2024/25) and the contributions to the Coronation mugs in 2023/24 (none in 2022/23). In box 6 this was due to the costs in 2024/25 of the new laptop and software and the £500 grant towards the repair of the church clock (with no equivalent costs in 2023/24).

5801 – Annual Grants from the Parish Council: 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.

The Clerk noted that Wanstrow Parish Council had offered Upton Noble School matched funding up to £1,000 for money raised to refurbish the school library and the Parish Council agreed to make a grant of £110 to the school project and a further grant of £110 to Citizens Advice Somerset. 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.

5802 - Authorisation of Payments: Councillors authorised the following payment in addition to the grants authorised above (Minute 5801):

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

5803 – Other Business – matters of information only. The Clerk reported that he had met with the Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) Community Liaison Officer in the Heritage Room to show her details of historic floods in Batcombe. The SRA were looking at what could be done to alleviate the risk of flooding in the Alham catchment area. Jayne Cox volunteered to attend the LCN AGM. The Clerk was asked to write to the Somerset Councillors to inform them of the concerns about the building work at Churchbridge Lodge.

5804 - Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 2nd July 2025 at 8.00pm in the Old School.

Janet Jones
2/7/25