

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 2nd July 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 Somerset Councillor Rob Reed.

5805 – Apologies for Absence and Acceptance of Reasons for Absence: None.

5806 – Declarations of Interest: Ian Sage and Jayne Cox declared an interest in the authorisation of the Clerk's salary as relatives of the Clerk.

5807 – Public Participation: None.

5808 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 4th June 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5809 – Matters Arising: Allotments – Peter Glaisher had spoken to a resident believed to be interested in taking on an allotment but the person concerned was ambivalent. The new lease had not been agreed with the landowner who had been seriously ill. The future of the allotments would be discussed at the October meeting.

New Divisions for the Somerset Council – Councillors had no strong feelings about the proposed new divisions where Batcombe would be included in the Evercreech Division.

5810 – Somerset Councillor's Report and Shepton Local Community Network (LCN): A report had been received from Councillor Claire Sully and distributed to Parish Councillors. Councillor Rob Reed reported the Council's debt was coming down and it could start taking on front line staff. More enforcement, planning and footpath officers were being taken on. While there was currently only one enforcement officer in the East Area of the Council, another would be starting in the next week and two more would be beginning work later in the year.

Peter Glaisher stated that he had been sent an e-mail about the LCN Highways Group meeting on May 29th but had missed it. He had apologised and had been sent the Minutes of the meeting.

Jayne Cox volunteered to attend the AGM of the LCN meeting on July 7th.

5811 – Community Review: Tom Price reported that 57 parishioners had attended the launch meeting for the Community Review and the launch had been well supported by local businesses providing refreshments for the evening. The steering Group had conducted a poll to find the top three topics of importance to the community which were found to be Traffic, Transport and Travel; Local Environment; Community Facilities and Services. The Steering Group was in the process of cutting down possible questions for the Survey in September from a possible 95 to 35.

5812 – Footpaths and Highways: Spargrove Footpath – Tom Price updated the Parish Council on the Somerset Council Rights of Way department's response to the tree blocking the Spargrove footpath.

Clare Kingston reported that a piece of the hedge between Bay Tree house and Boards Farm was hanging in the road causing an obstruction. The Clerk to write to the owner of the property.

The Clerk reported that the insurers did not require volunteers to undergo training before using the strimmer provided they were fit and competent and were supplied with safety equipment including goggles. Tom Price to get a quote for a second set of safety equipment.

The Clerk had distributed an update on the Enhanced Highways Maintenance Pilot Scheme to Councillors. The Clerk was asked to put a piece in the parish magazine asking parishioners to report problems on the Highways directly to the Somerset Council. It was noted that the road to Alham had been closed recently for jetting.

5813 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report: The annual inspection by RoSPA should have taken place in June but the report had not yet been received. Ian Sage had been unable to undertake the work in the Playing Field he had volunteered to do but would do before the Annual Fete. Steve Comley was thanked for repairing the water fountain that had been running continually and the Clerk was asked to send him a letter of thanks from the Council. Tom Price and Peter Glaisher had volunteered to cut the inside of the Playing Field hedge before the Annual Fete.

5814 – Planning Applications: Planning Application 2025/0993/HSE – Erection of outbuilding. Columbine Cottage, Kale Street, Batcombe, Shepton Mallet BA4 6AB – Householder Application. The outbuilding would be a single storey building, roughly 4.5m x 3.5m containing a shower room and toilet. None of the neighbours were believed to have an issue with the application. It was noted that the application contained no details of the drainage for the shower and toilet. Parking was an issue near Columbine Cottage. The Parish Council decided to recommend approval with the suggested condition that the outbuilding not be used for overnight accommodation to avoid increased parking problems.

Planning Application 2025/1015/LBC – Replacement of rear extension with associated works to exterior and interior to reconfigure bathroom arrangement on first floor and general repairs to fenestration and external walls. Form new opening through garden wall to provide improved access. Kings Hayes, Gold Hill, Batcombe, Shepton Mallet, Somerset BA4 6HF – Listed Building Consent. The Parish Council recommended the refusal of the application for Listed Building Consent on the grounds that the proposed works did not adequately address the pre-application advice given and so would result in a loss of historic fabric and damage to the character of the listed building. In particular the Parish Council felt that the proposed extension needed to be reduced in area and height so that its size was no greater than the current garden room extension in order to help preserve the historic character of Kings Hayes. The Parish Council did not object to the replacement of the modern extension with one more in keeping with the building, but did not want to see the loss of historic fabric resulting from the current proposal for Kings Hayes. The Parish Council also agreed with the pre-application advice that the large opening in the wall separating Kings Hayes from the garden of what was a separate building was inappropriate and a smaller opening similar to the existing gated opening would be better and would help to hide the modern extension from view.

Planning Application Updates: The crown reduction of the Ash tree below Wickham Cottages had been approved.

5815 – Review of the Social Media Policy and the Press and Media Policy: The Social Media Policy had been updated in 2022 and the Social Media Policy and the Press and Media Policy had been reviewed in 2023. No changes were felt to be needed and all Councillors were encouraged to read the Social Media Policy before using social media.

5816 - Authorisation of Payments: Councillors authorised the following payments:

Somerset Association of Local Councils Ltd - £204.70 – Affiliation fees.

Kevin Gale - £190.00 – Grass cutting in June. (Invoice not yet received.)

HMRC - £8.51 – Employer's National Insurance Contribution (April)

The Clerk – £1,392.25 – Salary and expenses for 1st Quarter.

Upton Noble School - £110.00 – Donation to library refurbishment.

Payment of the last two cheques would have to wait until a new cheque book was received. The payment of the donation to the School was waiting details of the account to be paid.

5817 – Other Business – matters of information only. Accounting Software – the Clerk reported that he was testing a free trial period with two accounting software packages recommended for smaller parish councils: Easy PC Accounts costing £78 a year and Semata's Parish Council Accounts costing £75 a year. Easy PC Accounts appeared to be the easier software to operate and as web-based software would allow Councillors to view the Accounts.

Jayne Cox reported that the Chair and the Treasurer of the Village Hall Trust would be standing down at the Annual Meeting of the Trust in October and there was a discussion about the future of the Trust.

5818 - Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 6th August 2025 at 8.00pm in the Old School if required to consider planning applications - otherwise Wednesday 3rd September at 8.00pm in the Old School.

Janet Jones
3/9/25