

# BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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## **You are Summoned to the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council to be held on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 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 Meetings held on Wednesdays 2<sup>nd</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup> July and 6<sup>th</sup> August 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 July 2<sup>nd</sup> is attached/enclosed.*

*Audit – Receipt of our Certificate of Exemption has been acknowledged by our external auditors, PKF Littlejohn LLP. There was no request to examine the Parish Council's accounting records during the period we were required to make these available.*

**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.*

*No Councillor was able to attend the Annual General Meeting of the Shepton Local Community Network (LCN) held on July 7<sup>th</sup> in the Council Chamber at Shepton Mallet.*

*Peter Glaisher to report on the Shepton LCN Highways Working Group meeting on August 21<sup>st</sup>.*

**7. Footpaths and Highways**

*Somerset Highways have asked us to let them know the location of salt bins in the parish and how full they are so they can plan their grit bin filling programme.*

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

*Tom has obtained a quote of £51.99 plus VAT for a Husqvarna Forestry Helmet from Read Agriservices. I understand the helmet comes with a visor and ear defenders. A second helmet will enable a second volunteer to use the Parish Council strimmer (after appropriate training from Tom).*

## **8. Community Review**

*Tom Price to report on progress with the Community Review. The survey has now been launched and will close on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> September. The survey can be completed online at [www.surveymonkey.com/r/BatcombeCR](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BatcombeCR)*

## **9. Allotments**

*The owners of the allotment field have now signed a two year extension to the Parish Council's lease of the field. However, they are unhappy with the current state of the field: "While there are a few beautifully maintained allotments most of the field looks a complete mess. There is rubbish/waste in the hedges, the path around the field and the uncultivated areas are overgrown and pernicious weeds are encroaching into the field. Could you please ensure that steps are taken to maintain the whole allotment field in good condition as required by the lease." Since I received this complaint I understand that one of the allotment holders has cut the grass in the communal areas of the field, so hopefully it now looks a little better. I have also e-mailed all the allotment holders to remind them of their joint responsibility under their allotment agreement to look after the communal areas of the field.*

*We will be making a decision on the future of the allotments at our next meeting on October 1<sup>st</sup>. I have informed the allotment holders of this and invited them to come to the meeting if they wish. I have also asked them to let me know before October 1<sup>st</sup> whether they plan to continue with their allotment(s). Currently we have one allotment holder with three allotments, one with two, and two with one – meaning that we have three vacant allotments. I have had one query about taking an allotment in July – but the person concerned has not got back to me. I have also had a query from one of the existing allotment holders with a single allotment wanting to take on a second allotment. Peter Glaisher informs me that the allotment holder with three allotments who also does most of the work in looking after the communal areas is looking to cut back on the time spent on the allotments next year.*

## **10. Playground - Maintenance Report**

***Annual Safety Inspection** – An electronic copy of the report of the RoSPA safety inspection has previously been distributed to Parish Councillors. If anyone wishes to have a paper copy please ask the Clerk.*

*As in previous years, most items are of low/medium risk with the actual risk of items being the same or slightly higher than the innate risk for that type of item. The exception is the fact that the inspector is unable to inspect the cable attachments on the cableway because they are covered. The inspector recommends an annual inspection of the cable attachments, which would involve dismantling the cableway. As this would need to be done by the suppliers, I suggest we contact the suppliers to find their view on the need for this inspection and how much it would cost for them to do it.*

*Again as in previous years, the inspector noted rot in the gateposts (which isn't a safety issue as the gateposts don't support the self-closing gate), strimmer damage to the posts supporting the overhead rings, which could accelerate rot in these posts, bowing in the picnic table, and a trip hazard in the cricket net. He also noted some shrinkage of the safety surfacing around the roundabout which might pose a trip hazard in future. None of these issues pose a significant risk.*

*Thanks to Peter Glaisher and Tom Price who cut back the inside of the Playing Field hedge before the Fete. The Fete Committee provided written confirmation that the PCC's insurers were happy to provide insurance cover for the Village Fete on the basis that a member of the PCC was on the Fete Committee provided that risk assessments were made and no dangerous activities undertaken. The Chair inspected the Playing Field after the Fete and found it in good condition with just a small amount of litter. It was noted that the Playing Field had been opened before the inspection.*

## **11. Planning Applications**

*None at present.*

**Planning Application Updates.** *The application for the erection of an outbuilding in the rear garden on Columbine Cottage has been approved. The application for the erection of six new-build dwellings to replace the nine dwellings approved under prior approval at Beeches Farm has also been approved. Listed Building Consent has been granted for the replacement of the existing casement windows with double glazed sash windows at Elm House and the replacement of the casement windows and repair of the door in the former shop there. The reduction of the Birch trees at Top O' Hollow has been approved. And the application for a detached double garage at Beeches Farm has been approved.*

## **12. Review of the Parish Council's Complaints Procedure**

*The Parish Council's Code of Practice for handling complaints can be downloaded from the Parish Council website on the Parish Council Documents page. This was adopted on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2003, last amended on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2011, and is based on a model produced by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). This procedure is only for complaints about the actions of the Parish Council as a body. Complaints about the Clerk should be dealt with by the Staffing Committee in accordance with the Clerk's Contract of Employment; and complaints against individual Councillors for breaches of the Council's Code of Conduct should be made to the Somerset Council's Monitoring Officer. We have only had one complaint since the Code of Practice was adopted. I am not aware of any need to amend the current Complaints Procedure.*

## **13. Bank Reconciliation and Budget Update**

*Financial Regulations require that each quarter a bank reconciliation is produced by the Clerk, checked by a member of the Council, and reported to the Council as soon as possible after the end of the quarter. I have been using Easy PC Accounts to produce this year's accounts and so the bank reconciliation looks a little different this year.*

*Financial Regulations also require an update on the budget each quarter. Again the accounting package means that the budget update looks a little different this year. There is no projection for the year ahead instead there is a comparison between the budget for period being considered and actual payments and receipts with a calculation of the variance between them. There is also a second comparison between the budget and the actual figures for the year to date – although as this is the first period the figures are the same. The period is actually up to July 31<sup>st</sup> which is four months rather than a quarter but that is because we don't have a budget report in August.*

*For the budget comparison the software requires entering which month or months the budgeted figures will be paid/received. This means some variances are just because amounts were paid/received in a different month to that expected.*

*The report shows that the precept was £500 more than the original figure proposed and the VAT repayment was £47 less than expected when the budget was produced. And the Community Review grant of £4,650 was not included in the budget.*

*The Playing Field grass cutting was £50 more than budgeted for the period but this is due to a month with three cuts. Playing Field maintenance budget is £244 below budget as only £6 was spent in the period and the cost of the electricity supply is less than budgeted to date.*

*The Clerk's salary is less than budgeted to date but there will be a back dated increase to come. The Clerk's expenses are less than budgeted. The insurance premium is higher than budgeted as there was a significant increase at the end of the three-year agreement. The variation in Affiliation Fees is because they were budgeted to be paid in a later month. The website fee appears more than budgeted because the budget has a monthly figure but the fees are actually paid quarterly.*

*The Grants should have been budgeted at £720 which was the amount donated. Other expenses so far are as budgeted.*

*On the basis of preparing the accounts to date and the budget report, I would recommend continuing with Easy PC Accounts as the Parish Councils accounting software. It will cost £78 a year (which has not being included in the budget) when the three month trial period ends.*

**14. Authorisation of Payment**

Kevin Gale – £190.00 – Grass cutting in August.

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

*Crime – The crime report for July shows no crime in Batcombe. This compares to five crimes the previous month.*

**16. Date of Next Meeting** - Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> October 2025 at 8.00pm in the Old School.

*Rob Sage*

Rob Sage – Clerk

27<sup>th</sup> August 2025