

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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

You are Summoned to the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council to be held on Wednesday 3rd December 2025 at 7.30pm 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 5th November 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 November 5th is attached/enclosed.

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 next LCN meeting will be held on 26th January 2026.

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England has reopened its consultation on the proposed new division boundaries for Somerset. This is due to them misunderstanding the Somerset Council's preference for single member divisions as a formal request. The reopened consultation will run from November 25th to January 14th and will allow anyone wishing to support multi-member divisions to have their views heard. The consultation can be found on the Commission's website at [Somerset | LGBCE](https://somerset.lgbce.org.uk) or <https://localgovernmentboundarycommissionforengland.cmail19.com/t/j-l-ydzmhl-hjidokjly-t/>

7. Footpaths and Highways

The road from Westcombe to Lower Alham which passes through the ford at Lower Alham is closed until January 1st 2027 "to limit inappropriate use of the ford".

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

A resident has reported the blocked drain at the bottom of Fry's Lane to the Somerset Council due to concerns about ice forming on the road at the junction with Fry's Lane in freezing weather.

8. Community Review

Tom Price to report on any progress with the Community Review. There will be an Open Meeting in the new year to share the results of the community survey with residents.

9. Allotments

Following the Parish Council's decision at the last meeting to stop providing allotments, giving current allotment holders 12 months' notice and inviting any new allotment holders to take on an allotment for one year only with no deposit: SE & SR have given up one allotment and share their remaining allotment for this year; SVW has taken on one allotment for this year only (which allotment will depend of whether KH leaves the polytunnel which is on one of his allotments; KH has given up his three allotments; RH has given up her allotment; YG has kept her allotment and taken on one additional allotment; and there has been no response from VE as to whether she wishes to keep her allotment. This means that we have either four or five allotments taken this year, bringing in either £140 or £175.

The Parish Council has earmarked funds of around £1,000 set aside to put the allotments field back to its original condition next year. YG and SVW have signed the new allotment holders agreement which allows the sharing of e-mail addresses and phone numbers with the other allotment holders and SE has indicated that she is happy to do so as well.

10. Playground - Maintenance Report

Ian Sage has removed the picnic bench from the Playing Field for repairs (as one of the seats had become detached from the table). The moles are still active in the Playing Field.

The Fete Committee have paid their £100 contribution towards providing the electricity for the Fete – they were waiting for an invoice.

11. Planning Applications

Two applications for tree works have been received and details shared with Parish Councillors. At Pastoral on Kale Street (Linch Lane): T1 - Apple tree - prune to tidy, remove crossing and dead branches, 10% thin; T2 - Acer tree - prune to tidy 0.5-1m. And at Netherlea (Back Lane): T1 - Leylandii – fell; T2 - Maple - reduce by 3m. Both applications were responded to by the Clerk under delegated authority after consultation with Parish Councillors. There were no objections to any of the tree works listed.

Planning Application Updates. *Approval has been given for the felling of the Cypress and the reduction of the Cryptomeria at Truncheon House.*

12. Review of the Parish Council's Connection with External Bodies

Council's Membership of the Somerset Association of Local Councils

Clerk's Membership of the Society of Local Council Clerks

Membership of both of these bodies is very helpful in providing information and advice on matters relating to the work of the Parish Council and would make the Clerk's job more difficult if they were not available. Membership of SALC cost £204.70 this year and the Clerk's membership of the SLCC cost £110. The SALC affiliation fees increased significantly from £127.13 in 2024/25 owing to greater demand on their support services as parish and town councils take on more work and responsibilities.

13. Budget and Precept for Year Ending 31st March 2027

At the last meeting Tom Price proposed that the Parish Council set aside money each year as earmarked funds for the purchase of new play equipment when the current equipment needs replacing so that the Parish Council will not have to raise funds again. This makes sense as Viridor Credits

whose grant provided most of the money for the current play equipment no longer provide grants in this area (as Dimmer is no longer being used for landfill). The Parish Council should decide if it wishes to do this and if so, how much to set aside each year – noting that the current play equipment cost £60,000.

Given the lack of response to the request for a volunteer internal auditor, I have obtained a list of local companies/ people providing this service. I have contacted a selection of these to obtain an indication of the cost of the internal audit next year.

These costs will need to be added into the budget provided at the last meeting before making a decision on the precept. The tax base will be available in mid-December, so I suggest deferring a decision until the January meeting. In case of the unlikely event that we are snowed in in January, I suggest the Council either agree a provisional precept at this meeting or delegated the final decision to the Clerk after consultation with Parish Councillors.

Online banking – an application has been made for online banking with NatWest with the Chair and the Clerk as “Account Leaders”. We will need to agree revised Financial Regulations in order to operate online banking which we can do at the January meeting. The model Financial Regulations for online banking produced by NALC require the Clerk to administer the online banking and allow him to be a signatory (unlike the regulation for cheque payments). What is not allowed under the regulations is for anyone to be part of the process of making online payments to themselves – which means we may need to continue paying the Clerk’s salary and expenses by cheque.

14. Authorisation of Payment

£???.00 Kevin Gale – Grass cutting in November. (*Invoice not yet received.*)

15. Other Business – matters of information only.

Nothing at present.

16. Date of Next Meeting - Wednesday 3rd December 2025 at 7.30pm in the Old School.

Rob Sage

Rob Sage – Clerk

26th November 2025