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 2nd December 2026 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 Chair 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 4th November 2026** 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 4th is attached/enclosed.

   Parking around Kings Hayes – the owners at Kings Hayes have responded to the concerns of the Parish Council about the inconsiderate parking of those working on their house and spoken to those workers.

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 Shepton LCN has a new link officer – Lyndsey Mayhew. The next meeting of the Shepton LCN will take place on Thursday December 10th – Agenda to follow. This will be an online only meeting from 7.00pm.

7. **Noise and Parking Complaints in Westcombe**
   Westcombe Dairy and Woodshedding Brewery have provided the following list of the actions they will take to reduce the impact of noise and parking from events at the taproom:

   Hours of Operation

   October-March - Friday 4.00pm – 8.00pm, Saturday 12noon – 8.00pm

   April-September - Friday 4.00pm – 8.00pm, Saturday 1.00pm – 9.00pm

Noise

In the event of amplified live music or recorded music being played all speakers shall be restricted to inside use. Music will stop 30 mins before closing.

A sign will be put up to ask patrons of the Beer Hall to be mindful of our neighbours at all times and to remain quiet when leaving.

Parking

Residents who previously have used Westcombe Dairy's Courtyard for parking will be advised to use the rear of Westcombe Dairy for parking.

Cones shall be put up Westcombe Road to avoid customers of Woodshedding parking along road and limit them to parking in courtyard. Signs will be placed on several cones to reinforce this message.

When parking in courtyard, a sign shall advise all vehicles to reverse park to allow for forward getaway, avoiding any potential incidents with pedestrians (particularly children)

We hope to this satisfies the concerns of the community and we remain open to any future dialogue.

8. Horticultural Society Proposals for the War Memorial Garden

The Horticultural Society will be presenting their proposed plans and planting scheme.

9. Allotments

Allotments are no longer being rented. The shed has been removed by the allotment owner but there are a number of items and rubbish left on the allotments. The former allotment holders have been asked to remove items and rubbish from their allotments. The owners of the field have spoken to Ian Sage about spraying and rotavating the field. They are happy for the field entrance to remain as is. The Parish Council to plan how to return the field to its original condition by the end of April.

10. Footpaths and Highways

Tom Price has forwarded the latest update from the Somerset Council Bridge Officer on the Spargrove footpath. By the time of the meeting, he will have attended Bridge #4089 with a member of Somerset Council's Arboriculture Team to undertake a professional assessment of the fallen tree and determine the scope of the works required. This will help establish the practical requirements and likely cost range for clearance, information which will be necessary for any future discussions with the respective landowners.

In respect of Bridge #4093 (the vehicle bridge on the footpath at Mill Farm to be replaced with a timber kit bridge), it is necessary to establish the condition and extent of the existing concrete bank seats, together with the length of the embedded steel girders, so that these can be properly considered within the replacement bridge contract.

s.130(6) Representation regarding Obstruction of Spargrove footpath. *s.130(6) of the Highways Act 1980 has been brought to the Parish Council's attention as a means to expedite some action regarding the fallen tree and damaged bridges on the Spargrove footpath (presumably the downstream bridges referred to above). The s130(6) procedure requires the Highway Authority to act where a right of way has been "unlawfully stopped up or obstructed" when a representation is made by a parish council. The nature of the obstruction - in this case the fallen tree that has blocked the footpath and damaged the two footbridges on footpath SM 2/14 near the junction with footpath SM 2/13 - and the intention to make a representation has to be placed on the Parish Council Agenda. The Parish Council must then authorise the Clerk or the Chair to make representations on its behalf. The representations need to be made in writing and sent by post to the Chief Executive of the Highway Authority making it clear that they are being made under s.130(6) and the writer is authorised to act on behalf of the Parish Council.*

If the Council decides to proceed with a s.130(6) Representation at this time, then it needs to pass a resolution authorising either the Clerk or the Chair to make representations on its behalf. The

question would be whether the Somerset Council could say that the actions of its Bridge Officer show that it is acting.

11. Mendip Community Transport

Bryony Harling has requested that the Parish Council discuss Mendip Community Transport (MCT) at this meeting. She has spoken to Kevin Riley from MCT who has outlined the services MCT offer to residents of Batcombe including the Mendip Slinky door-to-door bus service and their volunteer-run Hospital Car Service. Bryony would like the Parish Council to discuss how to make parishioners aware of what is available to them.

12. Playground - Maintenance Report

The Fete Committee have paid the requested contributions of £90 towards the cost of the electricity for the Fete and £10 towards the cost of replacing the tap broken at the Fete.

I have found one company that undertakes cableway inspections for £600. Will continue to look for other quotes.

13. Planning Applications

Planning Application 2026/2264/TCA – Aspen T1 Fell.
T1 is causing or contributing to damage to a listed building namely Kings Hayes House.
Kings Hayes House, Gold Hill, Batcombe – Works/Felling Trees in a CA.
The location and photograph of the tree can be found on the planning website at 2026/2264/TCA | Aspen T1 Fell. T1 is causing or contributing to damage to a listed building namely Kings Hayes House | Kings Hayes House Gold Hill Batcombe Shepton Mallet Somerset BA4 6HF or by entering the application number in the planning website search engine. There is also a covering letter describing the potential damage that the tree may cause to the building.

Planning Application Updates. *Another tree application was received since the last meeting – to fell a Cherry tree at Donegal Cottage on Kale Street. Parish Councillors were consulted on the application and as no comments were received the Clerk recommended approval under his delegated authority to respond to tree applications. The application to reduce the Hornbeams at Rockwell House has been approved.*

The Conservation Officer's report on the Listed Building Consent application for Boxbush Farmhouse recommended refusal of the application on the grounds that the extensions were not subordinate to the host building. Subsequently, revised plans have been submitted to address the Conservation Officer's concerns. The plans can be viewed at 2026/1390/LBC | Demolition of existing single storey extensions with the erection of side & rear extensions. Internal reconfiguration works, addition of skylights, glazed link to connect extension & erection of greenhouse. | Boxbush Farm Frys Lane To Mill Lane Batcombe Shepton Mallet Somerset BA4 6HD or by entering the application number in the planning website search engine. The Parish Council is not being consulted on the latest set of revised plans.

14. Administrative Items

Adoption of the Staffing Committee Terms of Reference

The Parish Council to formally adopt the Staffing Committee Terms of Reference circulated to Parish Councillors.

Feedback on Meeting with Fodo Higginson of SALC.

Tom Price would like the Parish Council to consider the following ideas from the Post Project Completion Meeting for recipients of the Community Health and Wellbeing grants held with Fodo Higginson of the Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC):

i. ***AI note taking*** *– potentially saving a significant amount of time in recording minutes and generating actions at Parish Council meetings. Tom would like to propose that the Parish Council adopt AI note taking to record the Minutes of future Parish Council meetings and that the*

Parish Council trial this using Circleback, an AI powered meeting assistant, for 3 months. Tom has a Circleback account, and would be happy for the Parish Council to use this for such a trial. It should be noted that there is a significant difference between note taking at a meeting and producing Minutes which are a legal record. I have checked the Clerks' Forum on the Society of Local Council Clerks website and the comments from those who have tried using AI is that the notes need considerable editing to produce acceptable Minutes as AI cannot always distinguish between general discussion and the decisions that need to be recorded. AI was found to be useful for producing summaries of working party discussions but not so much for producing Minutes. It would be interesting to compare Minutes produced by AI with those produced by the Clerk for the same meeting.

ii. ***SALC newsletter circulation****: Circulate all SALC newsletter updates to councillors, or all councillors register for the email updates individually, if they so wish.*

iii. ***Community Plan****: Steering Group to act as a conduit with the Parish Council (in a more official capacity). April Annual Parish Meeting - suggest Community Plan Action Groups present their work/progress and Steering Group provide an update and forward plans.*

15. 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 £196.99 this year and the Clerk's membership of the SLCC cost £116. The SALC affiliation fees were slightly less than last year after a big increase on the previous year. This was a result of SALC asking larger councils to fund a larger proportion of the costs of the increased demand on SALC's support services as parish and town councils take on more work and responsibilities.

16. Budget and Precept for Year Ending 31st March 2028

There are no changes to the budget for the year ending 31st March 2028 which was distributed with last month's Agenda. See the notes in last month's Agenda for details of the various elements in the budget. However, the decision not to fund the footpath diversion application does impact the long-term forecast to 2030 and an amended forecast is enclosed.

In the revised forecast the projection for this year shows a deficit of £1,724 (as a result of spending the remaining Community Review grant received the year before and of spending the earmarked allotments money restoring the allotments field). As a result, the Parish Council is projected to have funds of £10,900 at the end of this financial year, of which around £1,500 - £2,000 will be earmarked for new play equipment.

If there is a contested election next year costing around £1,000, and the precept is increased by £500 to £12,000, there will be a deficit of £1,000 on the year, leaving around £10,000 in Parish Council funds of which around £2,000 - £3,000 will be earmarked for new play equipment. (The Council agreed to put aside £500 plus any residue of the maintenance budget, so it isn't possible to be more precise.) If the election is not contested the cost will be significantly less.

If we continue to increase the precept by £500 a year there are predicted surpluses of around £350 in 2028/29 and £600 in 2029/30. However, the amount set aside for new play equipment will increase by at least £500 a year, which means that the unearmarked reserves will gradually reduce.

A decision on the level of the precept does not have to be made at this meeting - and can be deferred until the January meeting when the tax base for 2027/28 has been determined.

17. Authorisation of Payment

Kevin Gale – £?00.00 – Grass cutting in November. (*Invoice not yet received*.)

Financial Regulations require payments made online to be reported to the Parish Council at the next meeting. The online payments following the November meeting were:

Kevin Gale – £200.00 – Grass cutting in October. (Two cuts.)

The Three Horseshoes – £150.00 – Parish Council contribution to Community Survey prize.

H J Sage & Son – £29.99 – Cricket stumps purchased by Ian Sage (approved at October meeting).

18. **Other Business –** matters of information only. *Nothing at present.*

19. **Date of Next Meeting –** Wednesday 6th January 2027 at 7.30pm in the Old School.

Rob Sage

Rob Sage – Clerk 25th November 2026