

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 5th November 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 Meetings held on Wednesdays 1st & 15th October 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 October 1st 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.

7. Footpaths and Highways

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

Ian Sage has purchased the new grit bin for Hincombe Hill.

8. Community Review

Tom Price to report on any progress with the Community Review.

9. Allotments

The Parish Council had agreed a new Allotment Holders Agreement which included a £100 security deposit and emphasised the importance of allotment holders working together to maintain the communal areas, agreeing to share e-mail addresses and phone numbers between themselves to this end. Existing allotment holders had been given 12 months' notice on their current Agreement. If the

allotments continued they would need to sign a new Agreement by November 1st 2026 with a £100 deposit. If the allotments did not continue, they would need to quit their allotment by October 31st 2026.

Parish Councillors had agreed at the informal meeting held on Sunday 5th October that there would need to be seven allotments rented in order for the allotments to continue. A formal decision on the future of the allotments needs to be made at this meeting. Currently there is one new allotment holder wanting to rent two allotments and one existing allotment holder wanting to rent two additional allotments but deterred by the £100 deposit per allotment. The Council needs to decide whether to make a concession on the deposits where an allotment holder rents more than one allotment.

10. Playground - Maintenance Report

Nothing to report.

11. Planning Applications

None at present.

Planning Application Updates. *No updates to report.*

12. Licensing Application – Gilcombe Farm Festival in May

The Clerk has made a representation to the Licensing Authority, the Somerset Council, asking for the adoption of a rigorous Noise Management Plan, a hotline for local residents, and a reduction in the hours from 3.00am. As a result a hearing to consider the application and representations received had been called for 2.00pm on Wednesday November 5th (the day of this meeting) and the applicant had asked for a meeting with those making representations which had been arranged for 4.00pm on October 30th, both meetings to take place on Teams. As no other Councillor was available the Clerk will represent the Parish Council at these meetings and report back at this meeting.

13. Bank Reconciliation and Update on Budget for Year Ending 31st March 2026

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. As in September the fact that we are using Easy PC Accounts to produce this year's accounts means the bank reconciliation looks a little different with a reconciliation for each bank account – our current account and our reserve account.

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, with a comparison between the budget for period being considered and actual payments and receipts and 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. The period is actually two months August and September because the period for the last budget report was four months rather than a quarter as we don't have a budget report in August.

As noted last time, 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 only receipts during the period was a small amount of interest. The variation against budget under Miscellaneous Receipts is due to the fact that we have not yet received the electricity contribution due from the Fete Committee.

The Playing Field grass cutting was £20 under budget for the period but £30 over budget for the year to date. This is largely due to not being able to predict which months will have three cuts. Playing Field maintenance budget is £369 below budget for the year to date only £6 had been spent to September 30th – although the cost of the roller will come off this budget. The cost of the electricity supply is less than budgeted to date but the cost of the water supply is more than budgeted.

The Clerk's salary is less than budgeted to date but there was a back dated payment in October. 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 Affiliation Fees to SALC and NALC are £55 more than budgeted. This is due to the extra work that SALC is undertaking with the devolution of roles and assets from the Somerset Council to Parish Councils. The website fee is as budgeted over the year to date – there is no payment in this period as the fees are paid quarterly.

The Grants should have been budgeted at £720 which was the amount donated. Other expenses so far are as budgeted, apart from the payment for 50% of the cost of the Community Review which wasn't included in the budget. It should be noted that unless there are some expenses of the Community Review that I am not aware it appears that we will have about £1,150 of the grant left at the end of the year.

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

Enclosed is a budget for the year ending 31st March 2027. Again, because we are using Easy PC Accounts, the budget looks a little different from previous years. The first column of figures gives the budget for the year with subsequent columns giving the budget for each month.

As in previous years, the budget is produced on the basis of taking the projected figures for this year (apart from one-off expenditures) and adding increases in line with inflation. The budget only includes existing items of expenditure and not any additional items of expenditure. They have been produced to allow the Council to see the impact of additional expenditure which would need to be added to the budget.

Looking at the budget for 2026/27 the VAT refund will be around £100 less than this year as there have been no major items of expenditure. I have budgeted for an allotment rent of £280 – assuming two vacant allotments. Of course this may not be the case. The money being raised from the Mendip Lottery has finished and there is a small amount of bank interest. There should also be a contribution towards the cost of the electricity supply to the Playing Field from the Fete Committee.

The cost of the grass cutting may be higher than that projected for this year depending on any increase in the price per cut. I've set the figure for equipment maintenance at £750 as suggested last year, but there shouldn't be any major expenditure as the play equipment is still relatively new. The electricity and water supplies should be around the same level as this year.

I have assumed an increase in the Clerk's salary that is slightly less than this year's as inflation is reducing. Other expenditure on administration is likely to be similar to that projected for this year, although I have reduced the budget for the Clerk's expenses as these come in under budget each year.

The Parish Council may wish to consider its training budget as SALC are offering a wide range of training courses for Parish Councillors now and if Councillors wish to take advantage of these we will need a larger training budget.

The budget is an opportunity for the Council to review the level of its grants. Allotment expenses and the costs of maintaining the war memorial garden and the strimmer should be similar to those projected for this year. I have included the cost of a new grit bin each year under Miscellaneous Payments.

If the precept is unchanged at £11,000 the budget shows total receipts of £11,572 and total payments of £11,852 – a deficit of £280. Obviously any additional payments would increase the deficit.

Also attached is a forecast for the years 2027/29. This is in the same format as previous years as Easy PC Accounts don't produce a forecast. Essentially with the precept unchanged at £11,000 each year and no additional expenditure there would probably be deficits of around £1,795 in 2027/28 (assuming a contested Parish Council election) and £825 in 2028/29. This would leave reserves of £11,350 at the end of 2028/29, which would still be above the recommended level of reserves.

A decision on the level of the precept does not have to be made at this meeting - and can be deferred until the December or January meetings. We normally wait until the tax base for 2026/27 has been

determined in January so that we will know the impact of the precept on Council Tax. (If the tax base goes up, the same precept costs each Council Tax payer less – but if the tax base goes down, the same precept costs each Council Tax payer more.)

15. Authorisation of Payment

- £??0.00 Kevin Gale – Grass cutting in October. (*Invoice not yet received.*)
- £156.00 Oakley Machinery Ltd – Hire of roller. (*£130 + VAT*).
- £215.94 H J Sage & Son – Grit bin purchased by Ian Sage. (*£179.95 + VAT*)
- £14.36 H J Sage & Son – Sealant for roundabout gap. (*£11.97 + VAT*).

16. Other Business – matters of information only.

Nothing at present.

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

Rob Sage

Rob Sage – Clerk

26th October 2025