

BATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Rob Sage

Tel: 01749 850934

e-mail: clerk@batcombe-parish-council-somerset.org.uk

Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Batcombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 1st October 2025 in the Old School, Batcombe, commencing at 8.00pm.

Present - Councillors: Janet Jones – Chair, Jayne Cox, Peter Glaisher, Bryony Harling, Tom Price and Ian Sage.

Also Present: The Clerk – Rob Sage and six members of the public.

5844 – Apologies for Absence: Clare Kingston and Claire Sully – Somerset Councillor.

5845 – Declarations of Interest: Ian Sage and Jayne Cox declared interests in the agreement of the Clerk's salary and the authorisation of payment of the Clerk's salary as relatives of the Clerk.

5846 – Public Participation: None.

5847 – Future of the Allotments: This item was brought forward due to the presence of allotment holders and the owner of the allotment field. The Parish Council had agreed to make a decision on the future of the allotments at this meeting and if the decision was to cease providing allotments, the existing allotment holders need to be given 12 months' notice by November 1st. The Clerk reported that one existing allotment holder was interested in taking on two more allotments and three people from Frome had expressed an interest in taking on an allotment. If all these allotments were taken and the remaining current allotment holders kept their allotments all the allotments would be taken.

The Chair noted the concern over the state of the communal areas in the allotment field. The allotment field owner stated that she was not prepared to let the field if it continued to be filled with rubbish. It was agreed that there needed to be better communication with and between the allotment holders so that they were aware of their responsibilities to maintain their allotments and the communal areas and were regularly reminded of this. Councillors agreed to meet at the allotments field at 9.00am on Sunday morning to decide whether to continue with the allotments. The Council may be prepared to clean up the allotments field ready for the new allotment holders if it was decided to continue.

5848 – Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 3rd September 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5849 – Matters Arising: Action Table – A copy of the Action Table from the meeting on September 3rd had been distributed with the Agenda. A letter of thanks for the grant had been received from Upton Noble School. Peter Glaisher was seeking quotes for the cutting of the hedge in the allotments field. There was no update on the repair of the Spargrove footpath. It was felt that there was nowhere to place a grit bin at the Round House. Ian Sage was authorised to purchase a larger grit bin for Hincombe Hill – a 400l recycled bin in black and yellow. The existing bin to be moved – possibly to the top of Crows Hill. Discussion of the footpath at Eastcombe was deferred. Ian Sage had removed the tap from the bus shelter in the Playing Field and filled the gap around the roundabout with sealant.

5850 – Somerset Councillor’s Report and Shepton Local Community Network (LCN): A report had been received from Somerset Councillor Claire Sully and distributed to Parish Councillors. Jayne Cox had been unable to attend the LCN meeting on September 29th.

5851 – Footpaths and Highways: Grit bins and the Spargrove and Eastcombe footpaths were discussed under Matters Arising (Minute 5849 above). Consideration had been given to applying for a licence to conduct minor works on the highway which would allow volunteers to trim the entrances to footpaths near the highway but it was noted that the licence only applied where there was a 30mph speed limit – not 60mph as in Batcombe.

Strimmer – Tom Price had purchased a second helmet with visor and ear defenders which would allow a second person to use the strimmer.

5852 – Community Review: The Community Review Survey had closed on September 15th and Tom Price reported that there had been a 42% response with 149 adults and 27 young people completing the survey. This compares to an average 25-30% response rate for such surveys. Tom noted the winners of the prize draw. The Parish Council would be asked to contribute £150 towards the £250 cost of the voucher from The Three Horseshoes – to be invoiced by The Three Horseshoes. This money would come from the grant received for the Community Survey. A report on the survey was being prepared by Thrive (formerly the Community Council for Somerset) and would be available later in the Autumn.

5853 – Playing Field – Maintenance Report: The Clerk had contacted Sutcliffe Play about the dismantling inspection of the cableway and was awaiting a response.

Tom Price had spoken to the Cricket Club about using their roller on the Playing Field, who suggested hiring a roller as theirs would be too small for the Playing Field. As it was felt that the roller should be hired without waiting for this meeting, the Clerk authorised the hiring of the roller under Financial Regulation 5.15. Tom Price reported that the rolling of the Playing Field had taken place. The roller should cost £120 + VAT. It was agreed that the Playing Field should be rolled again in the Spring – to be placed on the March/April Agenda.

5854 – Planning Applications: There were no planning applications to consider.

Planning Updates: The application for the crown reduction of the Holm Oak at Batcombe House had been approved. The Parish Council had been informed of a Prior Approval application for the change of use of the Dutch barn on Cockpit Lane to a dwelling house. This was a notification only as the Parish Council is not consulted on Prior Approval applications. The Clerk reported an application to fell a Palm tree and coppice a Hazel tree at Millbrook on Chapel Row. Authority to make recommendations on tree applications had been delegated to the Clerk due to the short period to respond. Councillors had no objections to the tree works but noted the intention to replace the Palm tree with a more suitable tree.

5855 – Licence Application – Gilcombe Farm Festival in May: The Parish Council had been informed of a licensing application for a new annual festival at Gilcombe Farm to be called the Show of Hands Festival and to be held on the second bank holiday weekend in May. The application stated that live music would be played until 1.00am and recorded music until 3.00am across the weekend, Thursday evening to Monday morning. The Parish Council agreed to make a representation, asking for the adoption of a rigorous Noise Management Plan, a hotline for local residents, and a reduction in the hours from 3.00am.

5856 – Review of the Emergency Plan: The list of volunteers in the Parish Emergency Plan was updated by the Chair and Bryony Harling three years ago and the Plan was then updated to reflect the replacement of the District and County Councils by the new Somerset Council. It

was noted that the e-mails in the Plan needed updating and agreed to add what3words locations for each site. Parish Councillors would check details of the Plan and confirm to the Clerk.

5857 – Clerk’s Salary for 2025/26: The Clerk reported that the National Joint Council for Local Government Services had reached agreement on new pay scales for 2025/26. The agreement consisted of an increase of 3.2% across all pay scales up SCP 43 (pro rata for part time employees). This would mean the Clerk’s salary (on SCP 12) increasing from £14.36 an hour to £14.82 an hour backdated to April 2025. The National Association of Local Councils recommended that these salary scales were paid to all Clerks with the standard contract of employment. The Parish Council agreed the increase in the Clerk’s salary, which was in line with the Clerk’s Contract of Employment.

5858 – Online Banking: Online banking with NatWest, known as Bankline for Communities, required a maximum of four signatories on the account. The Parish Council had five signatories and Clare Kingston had volunteered to cease being a signatory. A resolution removing Clare as a signatory was proposed by Bryony Harling, seconded by Peter Glaisher, and agreed. A resolution to adopt online banking with Bankline for Communities was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Bryony Harling and agreed.

5859 - Authorisation of Payments: Councillors authorised the following payment:

£285.00 Kevin Gale – Grass cutting in the Playing Field (three cuts in September).

£1,486.89 The Clerk – Salary and expenses for the 2nd Quarter.

£11.31 HMRC – Income Tax and Employer’s NIC for 1st Quarter.

£114.00 Read Agriservices – Forestry Helmet.

Councillors also authorised the following payment retrospectively

£1,675.00 Thrive (Community Council for Somerset) - 50% of cost of Community Survey

5860 – Other Business – matters of information only. There was nothing to report.

5861 - Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 5th November 2025 at 7.30pm in the Old School, Batcombe.