

BELCHAMP ST PAUL AND BELCHAMP OTTEN PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 26 November 2019 at 7.30pm
at the Community House, Belchamp St Paul

Present: Councillors Tony Money (Acting Chairman for the start of the meeting), Norman East, Robin Lock, David McKee (Chairman – from Item 2261), Mark Skellett and Dave Winslow.

In attendance: Diane Smith (Parish Clerk). No members of the public were present.

2260. Appointment of Acting Chairman for the meeting

It was proposed by Cllr Dave Winslow, seconded by Cllr David McKee and unanimously agreed to appoint Cllr Tony Money as Acting Chairman for the start of the meeting. Cllr Money took the Chair.

2261. Election of permanent Chairman / Vice Chairman

It was proposed by Cllr Robin Lock, seconded by Cllr Dave Winslow and unanimously agreed to appoint Cllr David McKee as Chairman of the PC. Cllr McKee signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office and took the Chair.

In the absence of a volunteer, it was agreed to consider the appointment of a Vice Chairman at the next meeting.

The Chairman welcomed Cllr Mark Skellett to the Council for his first PC meeting. Cllr Skellett had completed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

2262. Apologies for absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies had been received from Councillors Stephen Nice and Jill West, District Councillor Iona Parker and County Councillor David Finch. There were no Declarations of Interest.

2263. Public Forum - No members of the public were present.

2264. Confirmation of the Minutes of the meeting on 22 October 2019

The Minutes were approved and were signed by the Chairman.

2265. Matters arising from the October meeting

1. Replacement Post Box in Church Street (Item 2225.3) – Members were pleased to note that a new post box had been installed near the church to replace the one that had been stolen. An e-mail had been received from a resident thanking the Council for liaising with Royal Mail to achieve this very satisfactory outcome.

2266. Essex County Council / Braintree District Council

1. Essex County Council – No report had been received from County Cllr David Finch this month.

2. Braintree District Council – No report had been received from District Cllr Iona Parker this month.

2267. BDC Local Plan

Members noted that the Examiner's Hearings, on the Garden Community aspect of the LP, would resume on 16 January 2020.

2268. Finance

1. The Income and Expenditure List was approved as follows:

	In (£)	Out (£)
1 Nov Diane Smith – Clerk's salary and expenses		183.75
8 Nov Rounders Club pitch hire	125.00	
8 Nov Transfer to PRMC account		125.00

Bank Current Account balance on 22 November 2019 was £9659 Deposit Account balance £15,815.
Playing Field Management Account balance £7402.

2. Approval of donation to Anthony Nolan charity in memory of Cllr Ian Paton

It was proposed by Cllr David Winslow, seconded by Cllr Norman East and unanimously agreed to donate £50 to the Anthony Nolan charity, in memory of Cllr Ian Paton.

3. Approval of donation to the Royal British Legion

It was proposed by Cllr David Winslow, seconded by Cllr Norman East and unanimously agreed to donate £50 to the Royal British Legion for the use of the “shadow silhouette” on the Book Box to mark Remembrance Sunday.

4. Purchase of replacement salt bin for Kettle Hill – Members discussed the possible purchase of a replacement salt bin but concluded that as the site was now on a regular gritting route this would not be necessary.

5. Initial consideration of 2020-21 Precept – Members studied the Draft Budget for 2020-21 which had been provided by the RFO. It was noted that the PC had the lowest Precept within the Braintree District. The PC's reserves were above the level recommended by the External Auditor (Reserve circa £25,000 compared to the Precept of £4,000) so in recent years the PC Budget had been running at a loss to lower the reserves. It was proposed by Cllr Mark Skellett, seconded by Cllr Tony Money and unanimously agreed to circulate a proposal to hold a minimum permanent reserve of £20,000 (net) going forward, for formal approval at the January PC meeting.

2269. Filling of other vacant positions following the resignation of Cllr Pheby

1. Community House Trust - The newly appointed PC Chairman, Cllr David McKee, would be ex officio Chairman of the Community House Trustees.

2. Playing Field Management Committee - Members noted that Cllr Dave Winslow had recently been appointed Chairman of the Playing Field Management Committee.

3. Parish Tree Warden – This position remained vacant. The Clerk would ask John Pheby if he would be willing to continue with the role.

4. PC Bank Account signatories – After some discussion, it was proposed by Cllr Norman East, seconded by Cllr Mark Skellett and unanimously agreed to add Cllrs David McKee and Dave Winslow as bank signatories and delete John Pheby and Cllr David Middleditch.

2270. Parish Councillor vacancies

The Clerk confirmed that BSP residents had not requested an election to fill the vacancy arising from the resignation of John Pheby and so BDC had instructed the PC to fill the vacancy by co-option. The vacancy for Belchamp Otten (following the death of Ian Paton) would be advertised shortly and the PC would know by the end of the year if that too should be filled by co-option. Three residents had expressed an interest in joining the PC (2 at BSP and 1 at Belchamp Otten). It was agreed to invite all interested candidates to attend the January PC meeting and ask each to speak briefly on their interests and what they would bring to the role. The decision to fill the vacancies would then be made by the PC after the meeting.

2271. Meeting dates for 2020

Members agreed the following meeting dates for 2020: 21 January, 3 March, 21 April, 19 May (Annual meeting) at 8pm, 7 July, 1 September, 20 October and 24 November. The Annual Parish Assembly for Belchamp Otten would be on 18 May at The Red Lion and the APA for BSP on 19 May. All meetings would commence at 7.30pm and be held in The Community House, BSP unless stated otherwise.

2272. Closure of Essexinfo.net website on 31 March 2020

Since the last meeting, details had been published by EALC of an alternative free website to replace Essexinfo.net. ‘Voice’ is the national equivalent of the County based website which is closing and it uses the same format. Cllr Jill West and the Clerk had looked at alternative providers but considered Voice to be the preferred option at this time. Cllr Mark Skellett had also researched website provision and offered longer term to set up a PC website using a template. He suggested that the PC should purchase a domain name which could be used on ‘Voice’ and then transferred to an independent website in due course, with minimal disruption. Members thanked Cllr Skellett for his offer and his input.

2273. Review of BDC Open Spaces Action Plan for 2020

Members reviewed the Open Spaces Action Plan but agreed to make no further amendments.

2274. The Community House

Members noted that The Community House was nearly 60 years old and that the Norfolk Reed roof was coming to the end of its life. To replace the thatched roof would cost in the region of £60,000. The thatched roof does not however overlap the walls and no gutters are fitted so water runs down the walls and the structure is suffering as a result. The Community House Trustees are considering replacing the thatch with a slate or tiled roof to greater protect the fabric of the building going forward. The non-functional chimneys would also be removed at the same time. The work would be funded from the Trust's reserves and from grants. The building was not Listed but was located in the Conservation Area so planning permission would be required for these works.

Members discussed the matter and whilst they regretted losing the thatched roof they understood the economics of the decision to replace the thatched roof with tiles or slate.

2275. Playing Field Management Committee

1. Section 106 funds – Cllr Dave Winslow reported that the PFMC were obtaining a 3rd quote for the additional play equipment.

2. Tractor shed – Members were pleased to note that the tractor shed doors were now in place and they would be painted externally when weather conditions permitted.

2276. Tree survey on Cole Green

The Clerk was awaiting details of the trees requiring a crown lift and would then submit a Tree Works application to BDC. She would arrange for the BDC Tree Officer to meet Cllr Tony Money and John Pheby to consider drawing up a Plan for the future care/replacement of the mature Horse Chestnut trees on Cole Green.

2277. Arrangements for a Christmas Tree on Cole Green

Cllr Robin Lock reported that the Christmas Tree had been ordered (similar size to last year at £85) and Dave Crook and other helpers would collect and erect it, in the existing base, on 2 December. Members discussed the idea of purchasing additional lights for the Christmas Tree and also for other trees on Cole Green. It was proposed by Cllr Robin Lock and seconded by Cllr Norman East that 5 sets of additional lights be purchased (1 extra for Christmas Tree, 1 for tree on triangle near Book Box and 3 for other trees on Cole Green) but this proposal was not carried (3 in favour, 3 against, Chairman's deciding vote against). It was then proposed by Cllr Robin Lock, seconded by Cllr Dave Winslow and agreed to purchase 2 additional sets of lights (1 extra for Christmas Tree plus 1 set for tree on triangle near Book Box) @ £30 per set plus £20 for batteries (4 in favour, 1 against, 1 abstention). Cllr Lock would purchase the 2 sets of lights.

2278. Highway and Footpath matters

1. P3 Footpath works - Members wished to record their thanks to Peter Hesketh and the members of the P3 Group for replacing the two footpath bridges near the parish boundary with Little Yeldham.

2. Community Speedwatch Group – Members noted that the Speedwatch Group had been unable to operate in recent weeks because the speed device was with Essex Police for its annual calibration checks.

2279. Correspondence

Members considered the Correspondence List which had been circulated by the Clerk. They noted the Essex Fire and Rescue Service public consultation, the Superfast Essex and NEGC Engagement events and the request for funding from the Dedham Vale and Stour Valley AONB. It was agreed to publicise the What3Words location identification system on the PC website and in Rural Rumbings and display posters on the notice boards.

2280. Planning applications and decisions

1. Application - Members considered the following application:

- 18/02239/FUL – Hole Farm, Knowl Green – Approval of reserved details for conditions 9 (access) and 11 (waste management). FOR INFORMATION ONLY.

2. Decisions - Members noted the following planning application decision:

- 19/01582/COUPA – Clare Downs Farm, Hickford Hill – Prior Approval for change of use of

agricultural building to a dwelling and for associated operational development. PRIOR APPROVAL
REQUIRED AND GIVEN.

2281. Urgent matters and future Agenda items - None

Next meeting

The meeting closed at 9.37pm

The next Council meeting will be held on Tuesday 21 January 2020 in The Community House,
Belchamp St Paul at 7.30pm

Signed: (Chairman)

21 January 2020