

BELCHAMP ST PAUL AND BELCHAMP OTTEN PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 19 January 2021 at 7.30pm using the Zoom online platform

Present: Councillors David McKee (Chairman), Harvey Bamford, Robin Lock, Sarah Mardon, David Middleditch (joined the meeting after Item 2382), Tony Money, Stephen Nice (left the meeting after Item 2392.2), Jill West and Dave Winslow plus County Councillor David Finch (left the meeting after Item 2379). No members of the public were present.
In attendance: Diane Smith (Clerk).

2378. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies had been received from Councillors Norman East and Scott Bridge and District Councillor Iona Parker. Cllr Dave Winslow repeated his previous Declaration of Interest in respect of the flooding problems in Gages Road (Item 2386). Members agreed that he should continue to take part in the discussion of this item.

2379. Essex County Council Report

It was agreed to consider this item at the start of the meeting. County Councillor David Finch reported on two main topics: **Covid-19 pandemic** – There had been a large increase in the number of Essex residents contracting Covid in recent weeks (up to 1400+ cases per 100,000 population) but the infection rate was now starting to show signs of declining. The vaccination programme had commenced although ECC was lobbying the NHS for increased supplies of the vaccine for Essex: **2021-2 Budget** - Essex was in the Top 10 of the most effective County Councils in England however the pandemic had caused significant pressure on their finances. They had nonetheless agreed not to increase their budget for 2021-22 so that element of Council Tax payments would remain unchanged. Because of the need to provide additional support to Care Homes at this difficult time, the Social Care element of the ECC Precept would be increased by 1.5%. Members thanked County Cllr Finch for attending the meeting and providing an update. He then left the meeting to fulfil another commitment.

2380. Public Forum – No members of the public were present.

2381. Confirmation of the Minutes of the meeting on 24 November 2020

The Minutes were approved and would be signed by the Chairman at the next meeting held in person. Members noted that the Chairman had recently signed all the Parish Council Minutes, from the March 2020 meeting onwards, strictly following all Government Covid-19 Guidelines in the process.

2382. Matters arising from the November PC meeting

- 1. Wi-fi connection to The Community House (Item 2366.2)** – Members were pleased to note that County Broadband had installed a broadband connection to The Community House. Both the installation and the subsequent service would be free of charge for the benefit of the community.
- 2. Christmas Tree on Cole Green (Item 2366)** – Cllr Robin Lock reported that everything had proceeded smoothly and many favourable comments had been received regarding the Christmas Tree. Members briefly discussed the possible future provision of a permanent tree and a mains electricity supply for the lights, but reiterated their previous decision to continue with the current arrangement going forward.
- 3. Highway problems** - Members noted that the following highway problems had now been resolved: the hole at Long Lane had been filled: the damaged chevrons at the bottom of Kettle Hill had been replaced: the missing 30mph repeater sign outside St Pauls Place, Gages Road had been replaced and the flapping 'road narrows sign' in Gages Road (on the approach to Knowl Green) had been secured. The Clerk had recently reported 2 fly tipping sites (between Kettle Hill and Shearing Place Road, BSP) to BDC and had reported a deep pothole at Pollards Green Road to ECC Highways.

2383. Braintree District Council

Members noted the written Report from District Cllr Iona Parker which included: an update on the Local Plan (see Item 2384 below): details of local Covid-19 vaccination sites and the availability of Covid PCR testing kits from Causeway House for non-symptomatic residents who wish to be tested: the approval by BDC of the new scheme of delegation for planning applications.

2384. BDC Local Plan

The Inspector had now found Section 1 of the BDC Local Plan 'legally sound' with the suggested amendments incorporated (removal of the proposals for the Garden Communities to the West of Braintree and near Marks Tey). The housing target for Braintree District is 716 new dwellings per year but BDC continues to have less than a 5 year supply of deliverable sites, mainly because large developers are obtaining planning permission but then delaying starting work.

2385. Finance

1. The Income and Expenditure List was approved as follows:		IN (£)	OUT (£)
30 Nov	Fred Eady – Litter picking at Belchamp Otten		63.00
30 Nov	Diane Smith – Clerk's salary and expenses		183.75
30 Nov	David Smith – Litter picking at BSP		63.00
21 Dec	BDC grant towards new notice board at Belchamp Otten	1000.00	
21 Dec	E-On – PFMC		12.73
23 Dec	Transfer PFMC	12.73	
24 Dec	Anglian Water – PFMC		50.58
30 Dec	Diane Smith – Clerk's salary and expenses		183.75
30 Dec	Robin Lock – Christmas tree		168.90
4 Jan 2021	Transfer PFMC	50.58	

Current account balance at 16 January 2021 was £7421.68. Deposit account balance £15,821. PFMC account balance £5918.

2. Consideration of Precept for 2021-22

Members had studied the financial reports circulated by the RFO and noted the Council's previously agreed minimum reserve level of £20,000. Because of urgent tree felling works on Cole Green and a significant reduction in revenue to the PFMC because of Covid-19 restrictions/closures the PC was projected to end the 2020-21 financial year with a loss of £5400 which would significantly reduce reserves. Further tree works were likely to be required in 2021-22 and in conjunction with planned staff salary increases, PC expenses were again likely to be higher. Income for 2021-22 could also reduce because of the possible loss of ECC verge cutting income and the impact of ongoing Covid-19 restrictions/closures.

It was accordingly proposed by Cllr Tony Money, seconded by Cllr Dave Winslow and unanimously agreed to increase the Precept figures for both parishes by 12.5% for 2021-22. This would be the first increase in the Precepts this century despite inflation and the withdrawal of the Parish Support Grant. The Chairman would sign the Precept request forms (£3375 for BSP and £1125 for Belchamp Otten) and they would be submitted to BDC. [NOTE: This equates to an increase of £2.64 p.a. for a Band D property in BSP to £20.71 p.a. and an increase of £1.69 p.a. for a Band D property in Belchamp Otten to £14.32 p.a.]

2386. Flooding at Gages Road

It was noted that the property owner in Gages Road had arranged for a local contractor to dig out the ditch at the rear of his property, in mid-December. Water in the ditch was now flowing freely. Extensive recent rain had not caused any flooding problems so members agreed to record their thanks to the property owner for undertaking the necessary remedial works and take the item off the Agenda.

2387. Tree works on Cole Green

a) Mature chestnut tree opposite the Primary School, BSP – The Clerk had contacted UK Power Networks for an update regarding when this tree would be felled but she was awaiting their response.

b) Mature chestnut trees opposite The Plough, Gages Road and outside 4 Savills at BSP – Recent wet and stormy weather had delayed this work which was now expected to take place in early February.

2388. Playing Field Management Committee

a) Application for Section 106 funds

The PFMC had considered various options regarding the application for Section 106 funding for improvements to the children's play equipment. It was proposed by Cllr Dave Winslow, seconded by Cllr David Middleditch and unanimously agreed to apply for funding totalling £4333.00 to purchase a wooden locomotive and carriage and a set of horizontal monkey bars with safety grass mats under. The quotation for £4333.00 plus VAT from Wicksteed would accordingly be accepted.

This decision would leave just under £900 of Section 106 funds available to claim towards the cost of new rubber matting under the slide in the future. The existing rubber tiles would be relayed under the slide for the short term and the situation would be monitored. Cllr Harvey Bamford would ask a local metalworker to quote for a replacement small metal strut on the slide as the original had broken.

b) Public fundraising appeal – Members noted that grants from the Essex Playing Field Association were normally limited to about £200. The PFMC were therefore looking into the possibility of setting up a Just Giving Page in the hope of raising about £2500 towards the cost of maintaining the children's play equipment at the Playing Field.

2389. Replacement noticeboard at Belchamp Otten

Members were pleased to learn that BDC had approved the grant application for £1000 towards the cost of a new noticeboard at Belchamp Otten. The grant monies had been received on 21 December and the Clerk had placed an order with Greenbarnes to supply the noticeboard. Delivery was currently scheduled for early March 2021 and Cllr Scott Bridge had arranged for volunteers to erect the noticeboard. Members thanked Cllr Scott Bridge for his work on this project.

2390. BDC Open Spaces Action Plan Review

The Clerk read out the items specified within the current Open Spaces Action Plan for both BSP and Belchamp Otten. Improvements to the bus shelter on Cole Green were discussed. Cllr Harvey Bamford volunteered to clean out the bus shelter in the Spring which was much appreciated (also see Item 2391 below). No changes to the Open Spaces Action Plan details were proposed.

2391. Correspondence

Members considered the Correspondence List which had been circulated by the Clerk. The following items were noted: ECC trial permitting electric scooters to use certain cycle tracks/lanes: ECC Essex wide bus shelter project to create a "better bus shelter estate": Renewal of PC website domain registration at £33.58: Nil Return submitted to the Charity Commission for the Village Green at BSP. Members considered a request for a resident to install a gate from their rear garden directly onto the playing field. No objection was raised to the principle of installing a gate providing it did not exceed 3 ft in width and was used only for pedestrian access (not for vehicles or other large items).

2392. Planning applications and decisions

1. Applications – Members considered the following applications:

- 20/02020/ELD – **1 Lodge Cottage, Knowl Green** – Application for Lawful Development Certificate for an existing use – vehicular access. NO COMMENT.

- 20/01993/HH – **The Mill House, Gages Road, BSP** – Demolition of existing single storey lean-to extension and garden wall, construction of replacement 2 storey side extension and new oak framed porch. New

windows, relocate chimney stack, demolish outbuildings and construct new single storey annexe attached to existing garage. NO COMMENT.

- 20/02009/LBC – **Little Amos Cottage, Cole Green, BSP** – Re-render like for like and emergency repairs to extension (retrospective to July-September 2019). NO COMMENT.

- 20/02065/PLD – **Barclay House, The Street, Belchamp Otten** – Erection of single storey rear extension. SENT FOR INFORMATION ONLY.

- 20/01107/FUL – **Land east of Pentlow Hill, Pentlow** – Solar farm. The PC had originally considered this application at their 1 September 2020 meeting (Item 2343) and agreed to support Pentlow PC in their request for additional information from the developers. Further information had subsequently been provided and Pentlow PC had submitted a Clarification Statement to BDC on 11 December objecting to the application. MEMBERS AGREED TO SUPPORT THE OBJECTIONS RAISED BY PENTLOW PC INCLUDING THE LACK OF CONSULTATION, VISUAL IMPACT, AGRICULTURAL LAND USE AND TRAFFIC.

2. Appeals – Members considered the following appeal:

- 20/00895/FUL – **Rose Cottage, Fowes Lane, Belchamp Otten** – Proposed 2 bedroom house. ORIGINAL PC COMMENT WOULD BE FORWARDED TO PLANNING INSPECTORATE. NO ADDITIONAL COMMENT.

3. Decisions – Members noted the following decisions:

- 11/01116/FUL – **Lantern Cottage, Cole Green, BSP** – Side extension – Approval of details reserved by Conditions 3 and 4 (external finishes). APPROVED.

- 20/00263/TPOCON – **Lymburners, Cole Green, BSP** – Fell 1 sycamore. APPROVED.

3. The Cherry Tree, Knowl Green – Deterioration of Listed Building – A BDC Enforcement Officer had visited The Cherry Tree and reported that the property appeared to be secure and that the roof, walls and woodwork were generally in “good condition” with only one small area of render damaged (to the right of the front door) which had been reported to the Historic Buildings Officer and the owner. Members were concerned that the BDC report did not specifically mention the inside of the building and agreed to ask for details regarding the parameters of the inspection.

2393. Urgent matters and proposals for future Agenda

1. Overflowing litter bins on Cole Green – The Clerk had reported to BDC before Christmas that the 2 litter bins on Cole Green (near the Village Crest and beside the bus shelter) were full and overflowing. BDC had subsequently emptied the bin near the Village Crest but the bus shelter bin was secured with a locked padlock which prevented them opening it for emptying. Cllr Harvey Bamford had recently succeeded in removing the padlock and replaced it with an alternative fixing. He agreed to also empty the bin initially, before BDC resumed responsibility for regular emptying. Members recorded their thanks to Cllr Harvey Bamford for his assistance with this problem.

2. Belchamp Otten defibrillator – The Clerk reported that the pads and battery in the defibrillator had reached their expiry date and had been replaced. The device had accordingly been registered as ‘Out of Order’ for a short period over Christmas/New Year whilst replacement items were delivered and fitted. The device was now fully operational again.

3. Replacement ‘No Parking on the Green’ sign – The Chairman reported that the cost of the replacement sign had now been re-imbursed by the householder whose removal van broke the original sign.

Next meeting

The meeting closed at 8.57pm.

The next Council meeting will be held on Tuesday 2 March 2021 at 7.30pm online using the Zoom platform.

Signed: (Chairman) 2 March 2021

