

BELCHAMP ST PAUL AND BELCHAMP OTTEN PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Belchamp St Paul Annual Parish Assembly held on Tuesday 12 April 2022
at 7.30pm in The Community House, Belchamp St Paul

Present: Councillors David McKee (Chairman), Harvey Bamford, Robin Lock and Dave Winslow
County Councillor Peter Schwier (left the meeting after Item 5), District Councillor Iona Parker and
Footpath Warden and Emergency Officer Peter Hesketh. No members of the public were present.
In attendance: Diane Smith (Clerk)

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

The Chairman welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending.
Apologies had been received from Councillors Ruth Carter, David Middleditch and John Pheby.
During the last year it was noted that Councillors Ruth Carter and John Pheby had joined the
Council, representing BSP, following the resignations of Jill West and Norman East.

2. Consideration of the Minutes of the APA held on 12 April 2021

The Minutes of the 2021 APA were approved and were signed by the Chairman.

3. Matters arising from the 2021 APA meeting

There were no matters arising.

4. Annual Reports

4.1 Chairman's Report - Cllr David McKee

The Chairman wished to thank all Councillors for their enthusiasm and commitment to Council matters over the last year and also thank Diane Smith (Clerk) and Cllr Tony Money (RFO) for completing the administrative work of the Council. Their combined knowledge and experience had proved invaluable. He also expressed his thanks to County Councillor Peter Schwier and District Councillor Iona Parker for taking such a keen interest in PC matters and providing regular advice and input. Fred Eady continued to undertake the litter picking at Belchamp Otten whilst Wendy Bird had taken over this role from Dave Smith in BSP and all were thanked for their significant contribution to keeping both villages looking at their best.

As the country emerged from the Covid 19 lockdowns the PC had continued to undertake their regular work which included managing the defibrillators, reporting potholes, signage and vegetation problems to ECC Highways, overseeing the Speedwatch Group and providing a Christmas Tree annually on Cole Green. He thanked everyone involved with the latter 2 projects for their time and commitment. The PC also regularly considered all planning applications and submitted comments to BDC as appropriate. It was noted that the most recent planning appeal, to convert The Cherry Tree public house at Knowl Green into 2 dwellings, was still being considered by the Planning Inspectorate because of unavoidable delays. The PC had been involved with local utility and other companies namely Eastlight Housing, to repair the pathway surface at the front of The Savilles, and National Power regarding the Bramford to Twinstead Electricity Reinforcement Scheme.

Specific PC projects in 2021-22 had included the planting of 3 new trees on Cole Green to replace those Horse Chestnut trees which had been felled due to disease. A CIF grant of £467 had been received to cover half the cost of this project and disease resistant tree species had been chosen for the replacement trees to maintain the character of the Green for future generations. The Book Box

and Village Sign at BSP had both been refurbished in the last year and the Chairman thanked Cllr Harvey Bamford for his work on these projects. An application for a Vehicle Activated Speed (VAS) sign in Gages Road had been submitted to the Braintree Local Highway Panel, following concerns expressed by residents at the dangerous speed of traffic in the village.

Lastly, the Council were undertaking the production of a joint Village Design Code for both BSP and Belchamp Otten. This will enable the views of local residents to be recorded, in respect to the appearance of the villages, and the document will be taken into account by BDC when planning applications are decided. An initial workshop is being held on Saturday 23 April to discuss the VDC and residents are encouraged to attend and get involved in this project.

Members thanked the Chairman for his work on behalf of the PC throughout the year.

4.2 Footpaths and Bridleways Report - Peter Hesketh

Peter Hesketh reported that because of ongoing Covid restrictions, the Belchamp Parish Paths Partnership (P3) Group, which had been set up in May 2018, had only completed minimal work during 2021. He had himself had undertaken some minor works during his regular survey walks but only one actual working party had taken place. This consisted of 4 volunteers spending a total of 7.5 hours repositioning 3 waymarker posts that had been knocked over by farm machinery.

Thankfully between 2018 and 2020 a huge amount of work had been undertaken in both villages to put the footpath signage into very good order and this continues to provide guidance for both regular walkers and visitors.

Future projects have been identified and approval is currently awaited from ECC to install a 4.5m bridge on FP14 at its junction with FP18 in BSP. Once approval is received a P3 working party will be arranged which will hopefully mark the resumption of regular sessions, now that Covid restrictions have finally eased.

The Footpath Warden went on to mention 2 'lost' footpaths on the boundary with a neighbouring parish. He has attempted to make contact with the relevant landowners and the neighbouring P3 Group organiser, as there is no point addressing the problem on our side of the boundary until the path can be reinstated in the next parish. Hopefully progress will be made in due course as it would be a shame to permanently lose these footpaths.

Peter Hesketh concluded the report by saying that he was very proud of the work that had been achieved by the local P3 volunteers over the last 4 years and that he was looking forward to 'normality' (whatever that may look like) returning soon.

The Chairman recorded his thanks to Peter Hesketh for his continued work organising the P3 Group. District Councillor Iona Parker also wished to record her thanks to the P3 Group for making all the local footpaths a pleasure to walk.

4.3 Tree Warden Report - John Pheby (Read out by the Clerk)

John Pheby reported that a Tree Replanting Plan had been adopted by the PC in May 2021 to ensure that the character of Cole Green was maintained in the future even if further existing mature Chestnut trees were lost because of disease. Following storms in January 2022, one further Horse Chestnut had been severely damaged and subsequently felled. On a more positive note, however, the PC had purchased and planted 3 new trees on Cole Green, with grant assistance from ECC. A flowering Cherry has been planted at the entrance to Savilles, opposite the existing flowering Cherry and 2 Indian Horse Chestnut trees, which are more disease resistant, have been planted in the gap from Savilles towards the Community House, caused by the cutting down of 2 diseased trees. Cllr David Middleditch was thanked for his assistance with these tree works.

The Tree Warden also reported that he had removed the ivy on the remaining Chestnut tree opposite the Primary School, on the recommendation of Sean Taylor (BDC Tree and Landscape Officer) to prolong its good health.

The Chairman thanked Cllrs John Pheby, David Middleditch, Harvey Bamford and Dave Winslow for their collective contribution towards the tree works.

4.4 Emergency Officer's Report – Peter Hesketh

Peter Hesketh had taken over the role of Emergency Officer in 2021 and he reported that there had been no emergency situations in the last year. Because of the small likelihood of an emergency occurring and the unpredictable nature of any such emergency it was agreed that it was better to be ready to react if and when an emergency situation occurred, rather than attempt to draft policies to cover all eventualities.

The Chairman recorded his thanks to Peter Hesketh for assuming the role of Emergency Officer.

4.5 Playing Field Management Committee Report - Dave Winslow

Dave Winslow, Chairman of the PFMC, reported that the ongoing Covid 19 restrictions had continued to severely curtail activity and funding for the Playing Field. The loss of both the Village Fete contribution and match day revenue severely impacted the PFMC finances. However, a series of local fundraising activities had produced an amazing total of £6440 for the PFMC, thanks to the generosity of local villagers (Garage Sale £1125, Raffle £1276, Just Giving donations £3874 and Miscellaneous sales £165).

Part of the fundraising income had recently been used to replace the safety matting beneath the main slide, at a cost of £3350 plus VAT. New Monkey Bars and a Baby Swing have also been installed which will be funded by the release of Section 106 monies, totalling £4178.20, being held by BDC on behalf of the Parish Council. The PFMC wished to thank both the PC and BDC for funding this additional equipment.

It is hoped that the Village Fete will be able to be held on 29 May 2022, with proceeds being split 50/50 between the PFMC and the Parochial Church Council. The former annual village cricket match between BSP and BO, is also to be resurrected, after a 20 year break, and will be held on 5 June 2022. Proceeds from the cricket match and another Garage Sale later in the year will both raise funds for the PFMC.

Future expenditure will include replacement of the main swings, which have recently been decommissioned following the discovery of rot in the wooden supports. The tractor shed doors will also be repaired/replaced shortly at a cost of approximately £150. In the longer term the viability of the pavilion will need to be considered as further significant maintenance works to the building become necessary. Volunteers are required for a working party which is being organised to carry out simple painting and maintenance works to the play equipment.

The PFMC wish to acknowledge the magnificent contribution of all the villagers who have supported the efforts of the PFMC in its management of the playing field over the last year.

The Chairman recorded his thanks to Dave Winslow and the PFMC for all their efforts organising the fundraising events throughout the year.

5. Essex County Council Report - County Councillor Peter Schwier

County Cllr Peter Schwier had circulated a Report which included the following main topics: the launch of Everyone's Essex Strategy, incorporating a 'levelling up' plan and the aim to reach net-zero carbon emissions in Essex by 2050: the ECC Budget for 2022-23 would include £200million over the next 4 years to support climate action and net zero policy, an additional £10million would be invested in skills and economic growth and £1.3 billion would also be invested in a capital programme over the next 4 years: the general ECC Precept for 2022-23 would reluctantly be increased by 1.99% whilst the Social Care Precept would also be increased by 2.5% (pressure on the social care market made an increase unavoidable): £135million would be spent on highways maintenance in 2022-23 and works would be prioritised based on severity of need.

County Cllr Peter Schwier went on to highlight the importance of regular communication from ECC with residents and businesses and working with District, Town and Parish Councils to ensure that information was disseminated to as many people as possible and as quickly as possible. He concluded by saying that it had been a pleasure and privilege to serve the residents of all the villages within the Hedingham Division for the past year and he looked forward to continuing to do so next year and beyond.

The Chairman recorded his thanks to County Cllr Peter Schwier for his regular attendance at PC meetings, his report and for keeping the PC informed of County Council matters.

6. Braintree District Council Report - District Councillor Iona Parker

District Cllr Iona Parker reported on the following topics: The BDC Local Plan Section 2 had undergone Examination by the Inspector in July 2021 and the Consultation on Modifications had followed towards the end of last year. The final Inspector's Report was expected shortly: Covid 19 had remained prominent in 2021 and BDC had invested in online technology to enable more efficient working in the new circumstances. They had also administered many Government Covid Grant schemes: BDC Planning Department had received many applications for large housing developments. When such applications were refused most developers then submitted an appeal. The decisions made by Appeal Inspector's in these cases had been somewhat inconsistent because BDC had not always been in a position to prove a 5 year land supply throughout the last year (they did, however, currently have a 5 year land supply): BDC had invested in 5 additional Planning Enforcement staff to strengthen the system: Tree whips and bulbs had been distributed to parishes to plant as part of the BDC Climate Change Strategy: the Councillor Grants Scheme would continue for 2021-22. This scheme had part funded a new Belchamp Otten notice board last year and would include funds towards a Belchamp Otten Jubilee street party in 2022 : "Rural Braintree" (including our villages) had been identified by ECC as an area where 'levelling up' measures were required to address poor connectivity and lack of employment opportunities.

The Chairman thanked District Cllr Iona Parker for her regular attendance at Council meetings, her report and her work throughout the year.

7. Public Forum

It was requested that a further defibrillator training session be held to enable new residents or those that had not been available for previous training sessions to learn how the devices worked. It was agreed that the Clerk would investigate the feasibility/cost of holding a further defibrillator training session.

The meeting closed at 8.12pm.

Signed: (Chairman)

April 2023