

BELCHAMP ST PAUL AND BELCHAMP OTTEN PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Belchamp Otten Annual Parish Assembly held on Monday 11 April 2022
at 7.30pm at The Red Lion, Fowes Lane, Belchamp Otten

Present: Councillors David McKee (Chairman), Scott Bridge and Tony Money and District Councillor Iona Parker. One member of the public was also 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 Councillor Sarah Mardon, County Councillor Peter Schwier, Tree Warden John Pheby, Footpath Warden and Emergency Officer Peter Hesketh and Playing Field Management Committee (PFMC) Chairman Dave Winslow.

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 - None

4. Annual Reports

4.1 Chairman's Report (Cllr David McKee)

The Chairman reported that Belchamp Otten currently had a Councillor vacancy, following the recent resignation of Stephen Nice after many years on the PC. Residents were encouraged to apply for the vacant position which would be filled by co-option.

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 in BSP and both were thanked for their significant contribution to keeping both villages looking at their best.

As the country emerged from the Covid 19 lockdown the PC had continued to undertake their regular work which included managing the defibrillators, reporting potholes, signage and vegetation problems to ECC Highways, overseeing Speedwatch, providing a Christmas Tree on Cole Green and considering all planning applications and submitting comments to BDC as appropriate. They had also been involved with 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.

Individual projects in 2021-22 had included the planting of 3 new trees on Cole Green to replace those felled due to disease. A CIF grant of £467 had been received to cover half the cost of this project and the disease resistant tree species chosen were intended to maintain the character of the Green for future generations. The refurbishment of the Book Box and Village Sign at BSP had been undertaken and the Chairman thanked Cllr Harvey Bamford for his work on these projects. Lastly, the Council were undertaking the production of a Village Design Code for both villages. 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.

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

4.2 Footpath Warden Report (Peter Hesketh – Read out by the Clerk)

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. Peter 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 been lifted.

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.

The report concluded by saying that Peter was very proud of the work that had been achieved by the local P3 volunteers over the last 5 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 he was not aware of any specific tree problems in Belchamp Otten but he asked residents to contact him if they had any concerns. The Chairman recorded his thanks to John Pheby for his work as Tree Warden.

4.4 Emergency Officer's Report (Peter Hesketh – Read out by the Clerk)

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

4.5 Playing Field Management Committee Report (Dave Winslow – Read out by the Chairman)

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 in 2021-2. 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 PRMC in its management of the playing field over the last couple of years.

The Chairman recorded his thanks to Dave Winslow and the PFMC for their significant work during the year.

5. Essex County Council Report (Read out by the Chairman)

County Cllr Peter Schwier reported on the following main topics: Launch of Everyone's Essex Strategy incorporating a 'levelling up' plan and the aim to reach net-zero carbon emissions in Essex by 2050: 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 invested in a capital programme over the next 4 years: The general Precept for 2022-23 would reluctantly be increased by 1.99% whilst the Social Care Precept would 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 concluded by saying that it had been a pleasure and privilege to serve the residents of all the villages within the Heddingham 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 the report and his work throughout the year.

6. Braintree District Council Report

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 then submitted an appeal. The various Appeal Inspector's decisions had been rather inconsistent because BDC had not always been in a position to prove a 5 year land supply throughout the last year (they did 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 2021 : “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 attendance, her report and her work throughout the year.

7. Public Forum

No matters were raised.

The meeting closed at 8.03pm.

Signed: (Chairman) April 2023