

BELCHAMP ST PAUL AND BELCHAMP OTTEN PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 24 May 2022 at 7.30pm at
The Community House, Gages Road, Belchamp St Paul

Present: Councillors David McKee (Chairman), Harvey Bamford, Scott Bridge, Ruth Carter, Robin Lock, David Middleditch, Tony Money, John Pheby and Dave Winslow. One member of the public attended for the discussion of Item 2587. In attendance: Diane Smith (Clerk).

2569. Election of Chairman

It was proposed by Cllr David Middleditch, seconded by Cllr Harvey Bamford and unanimously agreed that Cllr David McKee should continue as Chairman of the Parish Council. Cllr McKee signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

2570. Election of Vice Chairman

It was proposed by Cllr David Middleditch, seconded by Cllr Tony Money and unanimously agreed that Cllr Scott Bridge should continue as Vice Chairman of the Parish Council.

2571. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies had been received from Councillor Sarah Mardon plus County Councillor Peter Schwier and District Councillor Iona Parker. Cllr David Middleditch declared a Prejudicial Interest in Items 2586.1 and 2589 and left the meeting when this was discussed.

2572. Public Forum – No members of the public were present at this point in the meeting.

2573. Confirmation of the Minutes of the meeting on 12 April 2022

These Minutes were unanimously approved and were signed by the Chairman.

2574. Note the Minutes of the 2022 Annual Parish Assembly meetings for Belchamp Otten and Belchamp St Paul

The Minutes of these meetings, held on 11 April 2022 (Belchamp Otten) and 12 April 2022 (Belchamp St Paul) were noted. They would be formally approved at the respective APA meetings in 2023.

2575. Matters arising from the April PC meeting

- 1. Planning appeal for The Cherry Tree, Knowl Green (Item 2556.2)** – This application was still “in progress”.
- 2. Clearing ditch between Cole Green and The Savilles, BSP (Item 2561b)** – The Clerk had been in contact with the contractor and he had confirmed that a final clearance of the ditch would be undertaken on 24 June 2022.
- 3. BDC Street Cleaning Agreement (Item 2564)** – The Clerk confirmed that the Agreement had been completed and returned to BDC and BDC had confirmed that payment would be made in the next few days.
- 4. Parking problem at Savilles, BSP (Item 2567.1)** – The problem had been reported to Eastlight Community Housing. A response from them was awaited.
- 5. Christmas tree on Cole Green (item 2568.2)** - The Clerk had examined the “utilities maps” provided by County Broadband, when they installed their Superfast Broadband connections around Cole Green, but she confirmed that these maps only showed BT and broadband underground

cabling. She would investigate other possible sources of information regarding underground utilities on Cole Green.

6. Deeds for Parish Council owned land and property (Item 2568.3) – The Clerk had located the documents for Church Green at Belchamp Otten and the Playing Field and Cole Green at BSP. Members discussed the documents and it was agreed that the Clerk would circulate the main documents and maps to Members for their information. Cllr Scott Bridge agreed to assist with the scanning of the larger documents.

7. Highway matters referred to County Cllr Peter Schwier (Item 2544) – The County Councillor's responses were noted, as follows:

a) Broken signpost at the junction of Bakers Road and Bradley Hill, Ovington – The defect had been recorded by ECC but had been assessed as non-urgent so no timescale could be provided for a replacement sign. Members would raise this again with the County Councillor when he attended the next PC meeting.

b) PC contract with ECC to cut highway verges in BSP and Belchamp Otten - Members noted that in the current and continuing financial climate, ECC were not in a position to increase the payment made for this work.

8. Defibrillator training session (BSP APA 2022 Item 7) – It had been requested at the BSP Annual Parish Assembly that the PC arrange a further defibrillator training session for residents. The Clerk had obtained one quotation from The Heartbeat Trust, to provide a further training session, but was awaiting a further quotation from the East Anglian Ambulance Service. The Chairman would enquire whether the village's First Responder would be in a position to organise a training session. The matter would then be considered again at the next PC meeting.

2576. Co-option to fill Councillor vacancy for Belchamp Otten

The Clerk reported that no applications had been yet received for the Councillor vacancy for Belchamp Otten, despite extensive local advertising. Members agreed to 'spread the word' regarding the vacancy and this matter would be considered again at the next meeting.

2577. Annual PC Administrative Matters

1. Appointment/confirmation of Council Officers and Representatives

It was proposed by Cllr David Middleditch, seconded by Cllr Scott Bridge and unanimously agreed to approve the following positions:

Footpath Warden - Peter Hesketh

Emergency Officer - Peter Hesketh

Tree Warden - John Pheby

Community House Trustees (ex officio Chairman) – Cllr David McKee

2. Adoption of Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Financial Procedures and Code of Conduct

It was proposed by Cllr Ruth Carter, seconded by Cllr Dave Winslow and unanimously agreed to adopt these documents. It was agreed to add a Review of these documents to the Agenda for the next PC meeting.

3. Appointment of RFO and Internal Auditor / Confirmation of Bank Signatories

It was proposed by Cllr Harvey Bamford, seconded by Cllr John Pheby and unanimously agreed that Cllr Tony Money should continue as the Council's Responsible Financial Officer and that Jon Yates should continue as the Council's Internal Auditor. The PC bank signatories were confirmed as Cllrs Tony Money, David McKee and Dave Winslow (any two Councillors to sign).

2578. Essex County Council

Members noted details of e-mails received from County Cllr Peter Schwier since the last PC meeting, which had been circulated by the Clerk. No report had been received from County Councillor Schwier this month.

2579. Braintree District Council / BDC Local Plan

District Councillor Iona Parker had submitted a report which covered the following matters: the verge cutting trial, involving just a single cut in the autumn, would be extended for a further 3 years [It was agreed to report the overgrown verges at the bottom of Bradley Hill, BSP to BDC] : £800 of Councillor Grants Scheme funds were still available for small projects in 2022: BDC delivered 417 affordable homes in the District in the last year (target was 250) and 24 more affordable homes will be available shortly in Gt Yeldham: a new section has been created on the BDC website to provide useful advice to residents following the recent significant increase in the cost of living <https://www.braintree.gov.uk/community/debt-management-cost-living>. There was no further update on the BDC Local Plan.

2580. Finance

1. The Income and Expenditure List was approved as follows:		IN (£)	OUT (£)
21 April	E-On – PFMC		14.53
25 April	Transfer	14.53	
28 April	BDC – Precept - first instalment	2500.00	
29 April	Diane Smith – Clerk’s salary and expenses		192.50
3 May	Transfer	118.20	
3 May	Tony Money – Payroll software		70.80
3 May	Harvey Bamford – Fencing (PFMC)		118.20
5 May	Transfer (50% of tractor repair cost)	270.00	
6 May	Impressions Engine – Tractor repair		540.00
10 May	Wayleave	12.48	

Current account balance at 10 May 2022 was £2817.85, Deposit account balance £15823.52 and PFMC account £1998.29.

It was agreed that the Clerk would chase payment of the Section 106 monies from BDC.

2. Approval of 2022 Asset Register – Members noted that, following consultation with the PC insurers, the ‘Contents and Equipment’ values had been increased by 5% in the Asset Register and the ‘Buildings’ values increased by 10%. The timber swing had been deleted from the Asset Register and the Clerk’s laptop and printer had been added, along with the newly installed baby swing, monkey bars and safety surface under the slide at the Playing Field. The updated total for PC assets in 2022 was £137,779.43. It was proposed by Cllr Scott Bridge, seconded by Cllr Robin Lock and unanimously agreed to approve the 2022 Asset Register.

3. PC Insurance arrangements for 2022-23 – The RFO reported that the Council’s existing insurers, Royal Sun Alliance, had withdrawn from insuring the local council sector. The Council’s broker, BHIB, had obtained 2 quotations, from Ansvar and Aviva who continued to provide local council insurance. The initial Aviva quotation was however in the process of being updated because of requested changes to the policy details. It was proposed by Cllr David Middleditch, seconded by Cllr Harvey Bamford and unanimously agreed to accept the updated quotation from Aviva provided that it continued to be lower than the existing quote from Ansvar. [CLERK’S NOTE: The updated

quote from Aviva was received on 25 May and continued to be lower than the Ansvar quote. This Aviva quote was accepted by the RFO at a cost of £554.58 per year for a 3 year Long Term Undertaking]

2581. Audit for 2021-22

All the following documents had been circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting.

1. Receive and note the Internal Audit Report - It was proposed by Cllr Ruth Carter, seconded by Cllr David Middleditch and unanimously agreed to receive and note the Internal Audit Report from Jon Yates.

2. Approve the 2021-22 PC Accounts – It was proposed by Cllr David Middleditch, seconded by Cllr Robin Lock and unanimously agreed to approve the 2021-22 PC accounts.

3. Consider, approve and sign the Audit Annual Governance Statement – It was proposed by Cllr Dave Winslow, seconded by Cllr David Middleditch and unanimously agreed to approve the Annual Governance Statement for 2021-22. The document was signed by the Chairman and the Clerk.

4. Consider, approve and sign the Annual Accounting Statements and the Audit Exemption Certificate – It was proposed by Cllr Scott Bridge, seconded by Cllr Harvey Bamford and unanimously agreed to approve the Annual Accounting Statements and the Audit Exemption Certificate for 2021-22. Both these documents were then signed by the Chairman, having been certified and signed by the RFO prior to the meeting.

5. Confirm the 'Public Inspection of Accounts' period – Members noted that the Council's accounts would be available for public inspection from 13 June to 22 July 2022.

2582. Playing Field Management Committee

Cllr Dave Winslow (Chairman of the PFMC) reported that an Inter Village Cricket match (BSP/ BO) would be played on the playing field as part of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations. Members noted that helmets would be available for batsman, the possibility of using a softer ball was being investigated and insurance was in place to cover the event.

2583. Village Design Code workshop on 23 April 2022

Members were pleased to note that a total of 15 villagers had attended the workshop and 3 further residents had submitted their apologies. Those attending had gained a much greater insight into the purpose of a VDC and had commenced initial research work on the character of the 2 villages. It was agreed to publicise the success of the event in Rural Rumbings and contact attendees to ascertain if they would be willing to join the VDC Working Group. Members wished to record their thanks to Jan Stobart from the RCCE for leading the workshop. The formation of a VDC Working Group would be considered at the next meeting.

2584. ECC Verge Cutting Contract for 2022-23

Members noted that ECC had confirmed the operation of the contract for 2022-23 at a cost of £1970.45 (the same as in previous years). The Clerk would submit an invoice to ECC accordingly and also confirm the continuation of the contract with the 5 local farmers who were involved in the verge cutting work. Members wished to record their thanks to the 5 farmers for their ongoing commitment to this important work.

2585. Correspondence

Members considered the Correspondence List which had been circulated by the Clerk and the following items were noted: ECC Salt Bag Partnership for 2022-23 [No further supplies of salt were

required]: Essex Libraries Outreach service – The mobile library van can be booked to attend events to publicise the service it provides in villages: PC Precept for 2022-23 – First instalments received from BDC (£625 for BO and £1875 for BSP) : Local family history research information, offer to share data – The Clerk would ascertain if this was of interest to a local ‘historian’.

2586. Planning applications, decisions and appeals

1. New Applications

- 22/01138/LBC – **Larks Farmhouse, Sewells Lane, Belchamp Otten** – Replace section of wall plate, re-render external elevations, replace 2 external doors and re-roof. NO COMMENT.

- 22/01348/SCR – **Land north of Cutbush Farm, Bakers Road, BSP** – Erection of solar photovoltaic (PV) array, with a total export capacity up to 49.99mw. Cllr David Middleditch declared a Prejudicial Interest in this item and it was accordingly agreed to consider this application as the last item on the Agenda and Cllr Middleditch would leave the meeting before Councillors discussed it fully.

2. Decisions / Appeal decision

- APP/21510/D/21/3286842 – **Lantern Cottage, Cole Green, BSP** – Installation of outdoor swimming pool in rear garden with associated plant room (original ref: 21/02386/HH) – APPEAL GRANTED.

2587. Public Forum

1. Screening application for a solar farm north of Cutbush Farm, BSP (22/01348/SCR) – The resident attending the meeting had been involved in responding to other solar farm applications in neighbouring villages and offered to share his previous experience with the PC going forward. It was noted that this site was utilising good quality agricultural land, rather than former industrial land. It was also noted that there was a need to de-carbonise UK energy needs, to minimise the effects of global warming, and a need to consider both food security and energy security, as has been highlighted by the recent conflict in Ukraine. Various practical issues were then discussed and the status of this application was clarified (see Item 2589 below). Members thanked the resident for engaging with the PC and he left the meeting.

2588. Urgent matters and proposals for future Agenda - None.

2589. Planning application 22/01348/SCR – Land north of Cutbush Farm, Bakers Road, BSP – Cllr David Middleditch left the meeting before this item was discussed (see Item 2586.1 above). The Clerk clarified that this was purely a ‘Screening application’, for BDC to determine if an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) would need to be included when the full planning application was submitted at a later date. This technical decision by BDC would be based strictly on existing legislation and criteria. Members discussed the application and agreed to submit a comment to BDC expressing their concerns regarding certain elements of the proposal. The Clerk would prepare a draft response to BDC which would be approved by Councillors (excluding Cllr David Middleditch) prior to its submission to BDC.

Next meeting

The next Council meeting will be held on Tuesday 5 July 2022 at 7.30pm in The Community House, Gages Road, Belchamp St Paul. The meeting closed at 8.58pm.

Signed: (Chairman) 5 July 2022