

## **BELCHAMP ST PAUL AND BELCHAMP OTTEN PARISH COUNCIL**

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 17 January 2023 at 7.30pm at  
The Community House, Gages Road, Belchamp St Paul

**Present:** Councillors David McKee (Chairman), Harvey Bamford, Robin Lock, Sarah Mardon, David Middleditch (left the meeting after Item 2683.2), Tony Money and Hannah Rumsey plus District Councillor Iona Parker (left the meeting after Item 2674). No members of the public were present. In attendance: Diane Smith (Clerk).

### **2669. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest**

Apologies had been received from Councillors Scott Bridge, Ruth Carter, John Pheby and Dave Winslow plus County Councillor Peter Schwier. Councillor David Middleditch declared a Prejudicial Interest in Item 2683.3 (Solar Farm proposal) and left the meeting before this matter was discussed.

### **2670. Public Forum – No members of the public were present.**

Members were pleased to note that the work to replace the Community House roof was almost complete and they wished to record their thanks to Cllr Tony Money for all his work on this project.

### **2671. Confirmation of the Minutes of the meeting on 29 November 2022**

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

### **2672. Matters arising from the November PC meeting**

**1. Meeting dates for 2023 (Item 2658)** - The Clerk had booked the Community House and the meeting dates were accordingly confirmed. This information had been published on the PC website.

**2. Parking problem at Savilles, BSP (Item 2663)** – Members noted that for a short period the main offending vehicle had not parked on the hatched area but in the last few days it had returned.

**3. Directional signpost at the junction of The Street and Stettles Road, Belchamp Otten** - The Clerk had previously reported that one ‘finger’ of this post had been knocked off and that the remaining 2 fingers were pointing in the wrong directions. ECC Highways had classified the repair of this sign as “routine”. Local residents had however attempted to move the remaining fingers to point in the correct directions.

**4. Community 360 ‘Winter Resilience Bags’ (Item 2624)** – Members were pleased to note that a resident had requested a Winter Resilience Bag and been extremely pleased with the contents which were “so much more than expected”. The Clerk had thanked Community 360 on behalf of the resident and the PC.

### **2673. Essex County Council**

No report had been received from County Councillor Peter Schwier this month but Members noted the regular e-mails that he had forwarded to the PC since the last meeting.

### **2674. Braintree District Council**

District Councillor Iona Parker reported on the following matters:

a)2023-24 BDC Budget – BDC is facing a large budget gap because of rising inflation, fuel costs and increased staff salaries which mean that substantial cost savings need to be made. Even with cost savings, BDC reserves will be used to balance the budget over the 4 year ‘medium term financial strategy’ period. BDC needs to balance support for residents, provision of services and investment

for the future. Officers have already identified £400,000 of savings/additional income but decisions need to be made on further cost saving measures. These are likely to include: the introduction of a small fee for collecting garden green waste. The proposal is also to return to a full 12 month collection service to start in January 2024: discontinuing the paper copies of the recycling calendar (information still available online); and a 33% reduction in payments to PC's who enter into a Street Cleaning Agreement. BDC are likely to increase their element of Council Tax but it is still the 4<sup>th</sup> lowest Council Tax charge in Essex. [Members expressed their dissatisfaction with these proposals, the last of which will have a significant impact on their own budget].

b) Government Rural Prosperity Fund – BDC will receive £600,000 to provide grants of £10,000-£50,000 for capital projects. Applications can be made from February 2023.

c) New BDC Planning Forum – This will be introduced shortly and for all applications of more than 10 houses and renewable energy scheme applications, the developer will meet with the Planning Forum (consisting of members of the BDC Planning Committee and PC representative(s)) to discuss the details of their proposals in advance of the application being considered by BDC.

d) Parliamentary Constituency change – The proposal to create a new Halstead and Haverhill Constituency has been dropped.

The Chairman thanked District Councillor Iona Parker for attending the meeting and she left.

## 2675. Finance

1. The Income and Expenditure List was approved as follows:		IN (£)	OUT (£)
1 Dec	E-On – PFMC		33.18
22 Dec	E-On – PFMC		18.94
28 Dec	Transfer	33.18	
28 Dec	Transfer	18.94	
28 Dec	Diane Smith – Clerk's salary and expenses		192.50
28 Dec	Anglian Water - PFMC		39.03

Current account balance at 28 December 2022 was £5249.74.

**2. Approval of Precept for 2023-24** – [NOTE: The Clerk left the meeting whilst this item was being discussed]. Members reviewed the salary of the Clerk and the remuneration paid to the two litter pickers and agreed that all three should receive a 5% increase from April 2023. Members also agreed to keep the Precept unchanged for the 2023-24 financial year. The Chairman accordingly signed the BDC forms officially requesting £3750 for BSP and £1250 for Belchamp Otten. [NOTE: BDC subsequently confirmed that this would result in a payment of £22.73 p.a. for a Band D property in BSP and £16.85 p.a. for a Band D property in Belchamp Otten].

**3. Appointment of External Auditor for 2023-2028** – Members noted that PKF Littlejohn had been appointed by SAAA to continue as the external auditor for the next 5 years.

## 2676. Review of Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Financial Operation and Procedures and Councillor Code of Conduct documents

Members considered revised draft copies of all the above documents which had been prepared and circulated by the Clerk. The Clerk briefly outlined the main proposed changes to the documents. Members discussed the specific Quorum requirements for Councillors representing each parish at PC meetings and it was unanimously agreed to amend this to "Four members shall constitute a quorum provided at least two members represent BSP and one member represents Belchamp Otten" (Standing Order 3v refers). With this amendment incorporated members unanimously agreed to adopt the draft Standing Orders, Financial Operation and Procedures and Councillor Code

of Conduct documents. They also agreed to approve the draft Financial Regulations, on which the Financial Operation and Procedures document is based.

**2677. Submission of a Land Registry application for Title Absolute for Churchyard Green, Belchamp Otten and updating of the PC's contact details**

The Clerk reported that she had spoken to the Land Registry to clarify the documents required and they had confirmed that both forms could be submitted together. Members noted that the Land Registry fee to process the Title Absolute application would be £40 but there would also be a solicitor's fee to countersign the documents.

**2678. Playing Field Management Committee**

Cllr Harvey Bamford reported that work had commenced on preparing the site for the new swings. The wooden supports from the original swings had been reduced in height but further work was required.

**2679. Village Design Code Working Group**

Cllr Hannah Rumsey reported that a campaign was underway to recruit more volunteers to help with the collection of data for this project. Notices had been placed on the village and church notice boards, the PC website, in Rural Rumblings and on facebook.

**2680. Christmas Tree on Cole Green**

**1. Arrangements for 2022** – Cllrs Robin Lock and Harvey Bamford reported that the erection and decorating of the Christmas tree had gone very well. Members wished to record their thanks to all the volunteer helpers and also to Mr Gardiner who provided the tree and transported it to Cole Green for the Council.

**2. Future arrangements** – The Clerk had contacted BDC and Anglian Water to request details of the underground water supply network. BDC did not hold such information for Cole Green and no response had yet been received from Anglian Water. BDC had however confirmed that the PC did not require specific permission to plant any species of tree within the Conservation Area.

**2681. BDC Emergency Planning Review**

Members noted that the Clerk and the PC's Emergency Officer had checked the existing emergency document and confirmed that some updating would be required. Contact details for the Emergency Officer would be added to the document, to provide three emergency contacts, and updated contact information was being sought from the primary school and the church.

**2682. Correspondence**

Members considered the Correspondence List which had been circulated by the Clerk and the following items were noted: BDC Healthy Housing Draft Strategy Consultation: District Council Elections on 4 May 2023 – All voters will require Photo ID or a BDC Voter Authority Certificate: Local road closures on 16 January (Otten Road) and 6 February (Hickford Hill): Offer from Essex Police to attend community events in 2023 : Request from an insurance organisation to provide a link from the PC website to flooding information [ Permission not given because of the commercial nature of organisation].

**2683. Planning applications and decisions**

**1. New Application**

- 22/03218/HH –Ashwicken Lodge, Vicarage Road, BSP – Erect part single and part 2 storey rear extension. Members agreed via e-mail to make NO COMMENT.

**2. Decisions - None**

Cllr David Middleditch left the meeting.

**3. Solar Farm proposal at Bakers Road, BSP** – The full planning application for the scheme was expected to be submitted to BDC in Spring 2023. It was agreed to consider the format of the proposed PC public meeting at the next meeting and include advance publicity for the proposed meeting in Rural Rumblings.

**2684. Public Forum** - No members of the public were present.

**2685. Urgent matters and proposals for future Agenda**

**1. The Cherry Tree, Knowl Green** – Members noted that the former car park was no longer included in the sales particulars of the property.

**Next meeting**

The next Council meeting will be held on Tuesday 28 February 2023 at 7.30pm in The Community House, Gages Road, Belchamp St Paul. The meeting closed at 9.00 pm.

Signed: ..... (Chairman) 28 February 2023