

BELCHAMP ST PAUL AND BELCHAMP OTTEN PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 28 February 2023 at 7.30pm at
The Community House, Gages Road, Belchamp St Paul

Present: Councillors David McKee (Chairman), Harvey Bamford, Ruth Carter, Robin Lock, Sarah Mardon, Tony Money and Dave Winslow plus District Councillor Iona Parker (left the meeting after Item 2691). No members of the public were present. In attendance: Diane Smith (Clerk).

2686. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest (including the resignation of Cllr Scott Bridge)

Apologies had been received from Councillors David Middleditch, John Pheby and Hannah Rumsey plus County Councillor Peter Schwier. There were no Declarations of Interest. Members noted that Cllr Scott Bridge, Vice Chair of the Council, had submitted his resignation from the Parish Council because other personal commitments were preventing him from regularly attending meetings. BDC would be informed. Members were disappointed to receive the resignation and unanimously agreed that the Clerk would express the Council's thanks to Cllr Bridge for all his work on behalf of the PC. The Clerk explained that the vacant seat would be filled at the scheduled PC Elections on 4 May 2023. Members agreed to fill the vacant Vice Chair position after the forthcoming PC elections.

2687. Public Forum – No members of the public were present.

2688. Confirmation of the Minutes of the meeting on 17 January 2023

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

2689. Matters arising from the January PC meeting

- 1. Meeting dates for 2023 (Item 2672.1)** – Members noted that the date of the May 2023 PC meeting needed to be changed (from 23 May to 16 May) because of the forthcoming PC Elections on 4 May (the first post-election PC meeting must be held within 14 days of the election date). The change had been confirmed with the Community House and had been published on the PC website.
- 2. Precept for 2023-24 (Item 2675.2)** – BDC had confirmed that although the PC were not increasing the Precept totals for 2023-24, the PC element of the 2023-24 Council Tax calculation would increase by 1.94% for Belchamp Otten residents and 2.34% for BSP residents, because of changes in the tax base figures.
- 3. BDC Emergency Planning Review (Item 2681)** – The Clerk reported that BSP Church had now provided the requested contact information for the Review. A full response was awaited from BSP Primary School.
- 4. BSP Speedwatch Group Co-Ordinator** – A volunteer had come forward to complete the administrative work of the Group and she would be meeting the Clerk shortly to make the necessary arrangements.

2690. Essex County Council

Members noted the regular e-mails that had been received from Cllr Schwier since the last meeting.

2691. Braintree District Council

District Councillor Iona Parker reported on the following matters:

- a) 2023-24 BDC Budget – The budget had now been set and the District element of Council Tax

would increase by 2.5%, which is less than the maximum permitted. BDC have also agreed to hold back funds provisionally earmarked for the Millenium Link (A120 to Braintree Shopping Village) and provide a £25 rebate to every Council Tax payer instead. They have put aside £1 million for 'cost of living projects' and agreed to continue the Councillor Community Grant Scheme at £1250 per District Councillor. They have also agreed not to reduce the Street Cleaning Agreement payments for at least another year [Members welcomed this decision]. Funds had been allocated to investigate a charging system for the Green Bin Collection service.

b) Local Elections on 4 May 2023 – Everyone was reminded that suitable photographic ID would be required for all voters. Anyone without suitable photographic ID can apply in advance to BDC for a certificate enabling them to vote.

c) Government Consultation on the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – The NPPF was under review again and BDC had submitted a lengthy response to the consultation. In particular they had requested that the “5 year Housing Supply” criteria be removed because Council’s could approve sufficient applications to meet the criteria but if builders did not commence construction in a timely manner then those properties would not count towards the ‘5 year housing supply target’ and Council’s would be penalised.

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

2692. Finance

1. The Income and Expenditure List was approved as follows:		IN (£)	OUT (£)
9 Jan	Transfer	39.03	
9 Jan	Robin Lock – Christmas Tree battery		34.91
24 Jan	E-On – PFMC		25.71
24 Jan	Playdale Playgrounds – New swings PFMC		
	2220.00		
25 Jan	Transfer	2220.00	
30 Jan	Transfer	25.71	
30 Jan	Fred Eady – Litter picking at Belchamp Otten		66.00
30 Jan	Diane Smith – Clerk’s salary and expenses		325.04
30 Jan	Wendy Bird – Litter picking at BSP		66.00
14 Feb	The Community House – Hire of meeting room		80.00
14 Feb	Miss P Bowers – Verge cutting 2022-23		819.60
21 Feb	E-On – PFMC		25.17

Current account balance at 21 February 2023 was £3871.51, Deposit account £15,845.80 and PFMC account £7273.77.

2. Revised Precept Budget for 2023-24 – The RFO had revised the Budget to take into account decisions made at the January PC meeting and this would be circulated to Councillors by the Clerk.

3. Litter pickers – The RFO would contact the 2 litter pickers to confirm that they were willing to continue in their roles for 2023-24. Members recorded their thanks to the litter pickers for keeping the villages looking neat and tidy.

4. Quotation to clear the ditch between The Savilles and Cole Green, BSP twice yearly

The Clerk had requested a new quotation but despite sending a reminder this had not yet been received. This would be considered again at the next meeting.

2693. Submission of a Land Registry application for Title Absolute for Churchyard Green, Belchamp Otten and updating of the PC’s contact details

The Clerk had contacted a Sudbury solicitor and been informed that the solicitor’s fee to

verify/countersign the Land Registry documents would be £175 plus VAT. This was more than Members had expected and it was agreed that the Clerk would investigate other options.

2694. Playing Field Management Committee

Members were pleased to note that the new swings had been installed earlier that day. However, the chains provided were not the size ordered so these would be replaced by the correct ones very shortly.

Members noted that plans were underway to organise an Inter Village Sports Day on the playing field to mark the Coronation of King Charles III. A BDC grant had been applied for to help finance the event and profits will go to the Community House Trust. An inter village cricket match is also being planned for later in the year.

2695. Village Design Statement Working Group

Cllr Hannah Rumsey had provided an update. Members noted that following the recent campaign, more villagers had come forward to help with practical assessments. Cllr Rumsey had put together a basic framework for the document and also collected initial map data and background local information. This would all need to be checked and collated but collation of the character assessment forms had commenced. Jan Stobart from RCCE had been invited to attend the initial meeting of the VDS Working Group which was expected to take place in March. Members recorded their thanks to Cllr Rumsey for her ongoing work on this project.

2696. Christmas Tree on Cole Green – Future arrangements

The Clerk agreed to establish the likely cost of purchasing a mature Norway Spruce (approximately 15 foot high). The wording of the proposed leaflet drop would be considered at the next meeting.

2697 Parish Council Elections on 4 May 2023

The Clerk informed Members that BDC would be publishing the Notices of Election by 27 March and the deadline for receipt of completed Nomination Forms would be 4pm on 4 April (these must be hand delivered to BDC Offices in Braintree). She would circulate the full Election timetable to Councillors along with the BDC 'How to stand as a Councillor' document and blank copies of the Nomination Forms and Guidance sheets (downloaded from the Electoral Commission website). Members raised some queries which the Clerk would answer individually.

2698. Correspondence

Members considered the Correspondence List which had been circulated by the Clerk and the following items were noted: ECC to introduce a mandatory booking system at all Recycling Centres in Essex with effect from 13 March 2023: CPRE Membership fee due on 15 March. It was proposed by Cllr Ruth Carter, seconded by Cllr Robin Lock and agreed (with 1 abstention) to exercise the option to continue to pay an annual fee of £36.

2699. Planning applications and decisions

1. New Application

- 23/00235/HH – 1 Lodge Cottage, Knowl Green – Single storey rear and side extension and 2 bay cartlodge. COMMENT: PC SUPPORT THE APPLICATION (Majority decision - 5 in favour/ 2 abstentions)

- 23/00368/TPO – Walnut Tree House, Gages Road, BSP – Reduce crown by 10-12 ft and trim side to

balance shape (Walnut tree TPO 7/94). COMMENT: POSSIBLE CONCERN ABOUT DAMAGING THE TREE (Majority decision – 6 in favour / 1 abstention)

- 23/00445/TPOCON – Lamberts Farm, Gages Road, BSP – Multiple tree works in the Conservation Area. NO COMMENT.

2. Decision

- 22/03036/HH – Lindsells Farmhouse, Hickford Hill, BSP – 2 storey rear extension, front porch canopy, replacement windows and doors and re-render building. GRANTED.

3. Solar Farm proposal at Bakers Road, BSP – The full planning application had not yet been submitted to BDC. Members noted that the Clerk had recently become aware that residents in Hickford Hill and Church Street, BSP (near the church) had never received notification of the original consultation by BSR Energy. The Chairman agreed to discuss the format of the proposed public meeting with a local resident.

2700. Public Forum - No members of the public were present.

2701. Urgent matters and proposals for future Agenda

1. P3 Footpath Group – Members were pleased to learn that the P3 Group had resumed their working parties and had recently built a 12ft bridge at the junction of Footpaths 14 and 18 between Bakers Road, BSP and the church. Members recorded their thanks to the volunteers involved, the Footpath Warden Peter Hesketh and also to the local farmer who kindly agreed to transport all the materials to the site.

2. Annual Assembly meetings on 3 and 4 April – It was agreed to follow the same format as in 2022. No additional items were suggested for the Agenda.

3. Flytipping in layby off Church Street/Shearing Place Road – The Clerk had reported extensive fly tipping in this location and BDC had attended and cleared the site.

Next meetings

The Belchamp Otten Annual Assembly will be held in The Red Lion, Fowes Lane, Belchamp Otten on Monday 3 April at 7.30pm.

The Belchamp St Paul Annual Assembly will be held in The Community House, Gages Road, Belchamp St Paul on Tuesday 4 April at 7.30pm

The next Council meeting will be held in The Community House, Gages Road, Belchamp St Paul on Tuesday 4 April at 8.00pm (following on from the BSP Annual Assembly meeting).

The meeting closed at 8.37 pm.

Signed: (Chairman) 4 April 2023