

## BELCHAMP ST PAUL AND BELCHAMP OTTEN PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 4 April 2023 at 8.15pm at  
The Community House, Gages Road, Belchamp St Paul

**Present:** Councillors Tony Money (Acting Chairman), Harvey Bamford, Ruth Carter, Robin Lock, Sarah Mardon and Hannah Rumsey. No members of the public were present. In attendance: Diane Smith (Clerk).

### **2702. Appointment of a temporary Chairman for the meeting**

In the absence of the PC Chairman through illness and with the PC Vice Chairman position vacant, all Councillors present unanimously agreed to appoint Parish Councillor Tony Money to Chair the meeting.

### **2703. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest**

Apologies had been received from Councillors David McKee, David Middleditch, John Pheby and Dave Winslow plus County Councillor Peter Schwier and District Councillor Iona Parker. There were no Declarations of Interest.

**2704. Public Forum** – No members of the public were present.

### **2705. Confirmation of the Minutes of the meeting on 28 February 2023**

The Minutes were unanimously approved and were signed by the Acting Chairman.

### **2706. Matters arising from the February PC meeting**

**1. BDC Emergency Planning Review (Item 2689.3)** – The Clerk reported that the PC Emergency Officer had contacted the BSP Primary School again but was awaiting confirmation that the school would continue to supply information for the Emergency Plan.

**2. Litter Picker roles for 2023-24 (Item 2692.3)** – The RFO reported that the BSP litter picker, Wendy Bird, had confirmed her willingness to continue in the role for 2023-24. A formal response was awaited from the Belchamp Otten litter picker, Fred Eady.

### **2707. Essex County Council and Braintree District Council Reports**

Members noted the regular e-mails that had been received from County Councillor Schwier since the last meeting. Both the County and District Councillors had attended the Belchamp Otten Annual Parish Assembly the previous evening (3 April) and had submitted reports for the BSP Annual Parish Assembly which preceded this meeting. Details of their Reports can be found in the Minutes of the respective Annual Assembly meetings.

### **2708. Finance**

#### **1. The Income and Expenditure List was approved as follows:**

	IN (£)	OUT (£)
21 Feb E-On - PFMC		25.71
27 Feb Transfer	25.71	
3 Mar Diane Smith – Clerk’s salary and expenses		192.50
7 Mar Transfer	2220.24	
7 Mar Belchamp Otten PCC – Grant		415.00
7 Mar Belchamp St Paul PCC – Grant		550.00
7 Mar BSP Community House – Balance of grant		95.27

7 Mar	Essex and Herts Air Ambulance – Donation		250.00
7 Mar	Playdale Playgrounds – New swings PFMC		2220.24
7 Mar	Sudbury Citizen’s Advice Bureau – Grant		50.00
21 Mar	CPRE membership		36.00
24 Mar	Anglian Water – PFMC		41.90
27 Mar	Transfer	41.90	
29 Mar	Transfer	867.42	
30 Mar	Transfer		867.42
30 Mar	Fred Eady – Litter picking at Belchamp Otten		66.00
30 Mar	Wendy Bird – Litter picking at BSP		66.00
30 Mar	Diane Smith – Clerk’s salary and expenses		192.50
31 Mar	Playdale Playgrounds – PFMC		867.42
31 Mar	Transfer	867.42	

Current account balance at 31 March 2023 was £1983.95, Deposit account £15,853.27 and PFMC account £4121.80.

**2. PC Year End Accounts for 2022-23** – The RFO had circulated a provisional summary of the 2022-23 Accounts and reported that they were showing a small surplus of around £600. The provisional year end bank balance was £23,145.52, which was slightly less than at the same time last year. He confirmed that the accounts were currently with the auditor and should be available, along with the AGAR, for formal approval at the May PC meeting.

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

Despite further reminders no quote had yet been received from the original contractor. Members agreed that the Clerk should contact other local gardeners/tradesmen and ascertain if they would be interested in quoting for the ditch clearance work.

**2709. BDC Street Cleaning Agreement for 2023-24**

BDC had confirmed that they would be continuing to offer the PC £1377.38 for the 2023-24 financial year. Members unanimously agreed to accept this offer and continue with the Street Scene Partnership Agreement for a further year. The Clerk would sign and return the Agreement to BDC with a completed Activity Report for 2022-23.

**2710. The Community House Trust**

Because of the pandemic, the Trust had not held an annual public meeting recently. Cllr Tony Money therefore wished to provide an update to the PC, on the finances of The Community House Trust over the last few years. Significant expenditure included:

- More than £18,000 in 2019 to upgrade the Community House rented flat to meet the minimum Grade D standard for the Energy Performance Certificate. More upgrades are likely to be required in the future to meet new regulations.
- £1000 to cover the excess on an insurance subsidence claim in 2021-22. This claim also resulted in increased costs for subsequent insurance cover (premiums increased from £3074 in 2020-21 to £4330 last year and the policy compulsory excess for subsidence increased to £2500). There is now also a requirement to regularly inspect and restrict tree growth around the building and submit an Engineer’s Report on renewal.
- Fire Safety works were completed in 2021 (new fire alarm and lighting system) and last year (rear steps and exit door) which cost a total of just over £10,000.
- Redecoration has cost £3750.

- The thatched roof was replaced with slate tiles in 2022 at a cost of £109,000 plus planning and surveyor's fees. Several grants were however obtained to help fund the work, including £10,000 from Garfield Weston, £5000 from CIF, £5000 from Bernard Sunley and £2000 from FSJ. During this period of high expenditure, income had dropped dramatically because of the pandemic. In 2019 income was around £8000 but in 2022, after covid restrictions were largely removed, income was only £3903 which is less than half the pre-covid level. The Community House Trust are looking into more extensive advertising and an improved website to increase the level of bookings and would also welcome volunteers to help the Trust with regular gardening and maintenance work and fundraising activities. Members thanked Cllr Money for providing the comprehensive update. Cllr Harvey Bamford agreed to design a poster for the Trust.

#### **2711. P3 Footpath Group grant application for 2023-24**

Members noted that a grant request, for a provisional sum of £220, had been submitted to ECC by the Footpath Officer. This was expected to cover the cost of expenditure on additional safety equipment, replacement tools and consumables during 2023-24.

#### **2712. Community Speedwatch Group**

Members were pleased to note that a new organiser had been found for the Speedwatch Group and the transfer of information and equipment would take place shortly.

#### **2713. 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 investigated other options for a solicitor to verify/countersign the Land Registry documents and had received a quotation from Wayman and Long in Clare to undertake the work at a cost of £90 plus VAT. Members unanimously agreed to accept this quotation to avoid any further delay in submitting the documents to the Land Registry.

#### **2714. Playing Field Management Committee**

Members noted that a new PC representative on the PFMC would be required after the May election as Cllr Dave Winslow was not seeking re-election. This would be considered at the next meeting.

#### **2715. Village Design Statement Working Group**

The initial meeting of the VDS Working Group took place on 30 March at 10am via Zoom. Jan Stobart from RCCE attended. The format of the survey and the final document were discussed in detail and it was agreed that the next step would be to hold a public exhibition where information collected to date could be displayed and public responses obtained. The WG would meet again in the next few weeks.

#### **2716. Christmas Tree on Cole Green – Future arrangements**

The Clerk had contacted a number of nurseries to establish the cost of purchasing a mature Norway Spruce (approximately 15 foot high). A nursery near Felsted could supply a 12-15 foot high Picea Abies (Green Spruce), with a wrapped net and chain root ball, for around £200 including delivery and secure fixings. The PC would be responsible for off-loading the tree, digging a suitable hole (3' wide x 2' 6" deep) and planting the tree.

The Clerk read out a draft for the proposed leaflet drop. Members discussed the draft and suggested some amendments/additions. These would be incorporated and a revised draft would be circulated.

### **2717. Parish Council Elections on 4 May 2023**

The deadline for the submission of Nomination Forms had expired at 4pm today so BDC would be publishing details of the nominations received for each parish in the next day or two.

### **2718. Correspondence**

Members considered the Correspondence List which had been circulated by the Clerk and the following items were noted: BDC Pre-Election Period Guidance for Members (Purdah): PKF Littlejohn timetable for the submission of the 2022-23 AGAR documents (deadline 3 July 2023): UK Government Emergency Alert National Test on 23 April at 3pm: Local Government Boundary Commission for England Review to recommend new electoral arrangements for ECC: BBC Essex – Essex Quest radio programme featured BSP Book Exchange on 19 March.

### **2719. Planning applications and decisions**

#### **1. New Application**

- 23/00622/ELD – Annexe at Little Acre, The Street, Belchamp Otten – Certificate of Lawfulness for an existing use – Use of annexe as an independent dwelling (4+ years). REF: Original application 13/00911/FUL Condition3. FOR INFORMATION ONLY.

#### **2. Decisions**

- 23/00235/HH – 1 Lodge Cottage, Knowl Green – Single storey rear and side extension and 2 bay cartlodge. GRANTED.

- 23/00445/TPOCON – Lamberts Farm, Gages Road, BSP – Multiple tree works in the Conservation Area. GRANTED.

**3. Solar Farm proposal at Bakers Road, BSP** – The full planning application had not yet been submitted to BDC. It was agreed that the proposed public meeting should be ‘in person’ but ideally it should also incorporate a Zoom online option, to involve as many residents as possible. BSR Energy would be invited to address the meeting (in person or online) and they would then leave. Residents and Councillors would seek to discuss the proposal in a fair and inclusive way concentrating on the facts and avoiding emotive and ‘NIMBY’ type sentiments. James Cleverley MP would be invited to attend.

**2720. Public Forum** - No members of the public were present.

### **2721. Urgent matters and proposals for future Agenda**

**1. Water leak at Churchyard Green, Belchamp Otten** – The Clerk had circulated details of this problem to Members. It was unanimously agreed to permit the church to dig a trench across part of Churchyard Green in an attempt to locate the water leak and repair it. The trench would be infilled and the existing grass relayed at the end of the project, to minimise any long term detrimental visual impact.

**2. Diesel supply for PC tractor** – Members noted that the existing diesel supply was nearly exhausted. Cllr Harvey Bamford agreed to look into obtaining a further supply.

**3. Additional dog bin on Footpath 26 near The Cherry Tree at Knowl Green** – There were currently no dog bins located in Knowl Green and it was suggested that one should be installed where FP26 meets Gages Road. This would be considered at the next meeting.

**4. Inter Village Cricket Match** – It was suggested that this year’s match should include some female players. The suggestion would be passed on to the organisers of the match, for their consideration.

**5. Blocked ditch at Church Cottage, Belchamp Otten** – This would be reported to ECC Highways.

**Next meeting**

The Annual Council meeting will be held in The Community House, Gages Road, Belchamp St Paul on Tuesday 16 May at 7.30pm.

The meeting closed at 9.51 pm.

Signed: ..... (Chairman) 16 May 2023