

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

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 16 May 2023 at 7.30pm at  
The Community House, Gages Road, Belchamp St Paul

**Present:** Councillors David McKee (Chairman), Ruth Carter, Holly Chaplin, Sarah Mardon, David Middleditch, Tony Money and Hannah Rumsey plus County Councillor Peter Schwier (who entered during Item 2731 and left the meeting after delivering his report). No members of the public were present. In attendance: Diane Smith (Clerk).

### **2722. Election of Chairman**

It was proposed by Cllr David Middleditch, seconded by Cllr Ruth Carter and unanimously agreed that Cllr David McKee should continue as Chairman for a further year. The Chairman signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

### **2723. Election of Vice Chair**

It was proposed by Cllr Ruth Carter, seconded by Cllr David Middleditch and unanimously agreed that Cllr Sarah Mardon should become Vice Chair of the Council.

### **2724. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest**

Apologies had been received from Councillors Harvey Bamford, Robin Lock and John Pheby plus District Councillor Iona Parker. Cllr David Middleditch declared a prejudicial interest in Item 2745.3.

### **2725. Parish Council election on 4 May 2023**

Members noted that 4 nominations had been received by BDC to fill the 4 council seats representing Belchamp Otten. Holly Chaplin, Sarah Mardon, Tony Money and Hannah Rumsey had accordingly all been declared duly elected, for a term of 4 years.

There had been 6 nominations to fill the 7 council seats representing Belchamp St Paul and Harvey Bamford, Ruth Carter, Robin Lock, David McKee, David Middleditch, John Pheby had all been declared duly elected, for a term of 4 years. There remained 1 vacant seat for Belchamp St Paul (see below). All Councillors present had completed their Declarations of Acceptance of Office. It was noted that all Councillors were required to submit their Register of Interests and Election Expenses forms to BDC by the respective deadlines.

The Chairman took this opportunity to record his thanks to Dave Winslow, who did not stand for re-election, for his 9 years of splendid service to the community as a Councillor.

### **2726. Co-option to fill vacant seat for Belchamp St Paul**

Following the recent election, there remained 1 vacant seat for Belchamp St Paul which the PC would fill by co-option. It was agreed to advertise this vacancy in the parish magazine, on the notice boards and website and by word of mouth and consider any applications received at the next meeting.

**2727. Public Forum** – No members of the public were present.

### **2728. Confirmation of the Minutes of the meeting on 4 April 2023**

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

### **2729. To note the Minutes of the Belchamp Otten Annual Assembly on 3 April and the Belchamp St Paul Annual Assembly on 4 April 2023**

Members noted the Minutes of the respective Annual Assembly meetings. These Minutes would be formally approved at the 2024 Annual Assembly meetings.

### **2730. Matters arising from the April PC meeting**

- 1. Litter Picker roles for 2023-24 (Item 2706.2)** – The RFO reported that the Belchamp Otten litter picker, Fred Eady, had confirmed his willingness to continue in the role for 2023-24.
- 2. Diesel for the tractor (Item 2721.2)** – Members noted that a supply of diesel for the tractor had been ordered and coolant had also been purchased at a cost of £29.99.
- 3. New dog bin on FP26 near The Cherry Tree, Knowl Green (Item 2721.3)** – The cost of a new dog bin would be in the region of £200 plus installation. It was agreed that the preferred location would be affixed to the footpath sign where the footpath joins Gages Road. Members agreed to look into the possibility of obtaining a grant from our District Councillor or County Councillor for this project.
- 4. Blocked ditch near Church Cottage, Belchamp Otten (Item 2721.5)** – The blocked ditch had been reported to ECC Highways however Cllr Hannah Rumsey had ascertained that historically the Environment Agency had requested the landowner to block off the ditch. It was accordingly agreed to take no further action on this matter.

### **2731. PC annual administrative matters**

- 1. Appointment /approval of Council Officers and Representatives** – The following appointments were proposed by Cllr David Middleditch, seconded by Cllr Ruth Carter and unanimously agreed: Footpath Warden – Peter Hesketh / Tree Warden – Cllr John Pheby / Emergency Officer – Peter Hesketh / Ex Officio Chair of the Community House Trustees – Cllr David McKee. See Item 2741 for Playing Field Management Committee.
- 2. Adoption of Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Councillors Code of Conduct** – It was proposed by Cllr Sarah Mardon, seconded by Cllr Hannah Rumsey and unanimously agreed to adopt the above documents, all of which were reviewed by the PC during 2022.
- 3. Appointment of RFO and Internal Auditor / Confirmation of bank signatories** – It was proposed by Cllr Ruth Carter, seconded by Cllr Holly Chaplin and unanimously agreed that Cllr Tony Money should continue as RFO and Jon Yates as Internal Auditor. It was also unanimously agreed that Cllrs Tony Money and David McKee should continue as bank signatories and that Cllr Sarah Mardon should replace Dave Winslow as the third signatory.

### **2732. Essex County Council matters**

Members noted the regular e-mails that had been received from County Councillor Schwier since the last meeting. County Cllr Peter Schwier reported on the following matters: **Potholes** – Many parish councils have been chasing pothole repairs. At today's Full Council meeting, ECC have agreed to use a prudent financial underspend (approximately £2.5 million) from another budgetary area to fund additional pothole repairs. They will engage direct contractors for this work and follow a 'make safe and fill policy' whereby temporary repairs are carried out as a matter of urgency and then this is followed by a permanent repair later. This should significantly improve the pothole situation. **Street lights** – ECC have converted over 100,000 street lights to LED throughout the County. **Libraries** – Following campaigns in recent years there has been a 66,000 increase in library membership and both adults and children are using the libraries much more. The Chairman thanked County Cllr Schwier for his attendance and he left the meeting.

### **2733. Braintree District Council matters**

District Cllr Iona Parker had submitted a brief report in which she expressed her delight at being re-

elected as ward member for Stour Valley North on 4 May. BDC is now made up of 26 Conservative councillors, 9 from the Labour Party, 7 Independents, 4 Green and 3 Halstead Residents. The Conservatives therefore have an overall majority of 3. The BDC AGM will take place on 25 May where the Leader of the Council and membership of committees will be decided.

## 2734. Finance

<b>1. The Income and Expenditure List was approved as follows:</b>		IN (£)	OUT (£)
20 Apr	Wayleave	12.48	
24 Apr	HMRC – VAT Refund	1186.50	
27 Apr	BDC – Precept – First instalment	2500.00	
28 Apr	PFMC – Share of VAT Refund		915.96
2 May	HMRC – Tax on salary		16.60
2 May	Diane Smith – Clerk’s salary and expenses		190.07
2 May	Harvey Bamford – Diesel for tractor (temporary supply)		32.18
3 May	Community Heartbeat Trust – Belchamp Otten defibrillator		162.00
3 May	EALC – Annual subscription		192.44
3 May	Dave Winslow – Diesel for tractor		269.06

Current account balance at 3 May 2023 was £3904.62, Deposit account £15,863.37 and PFMC account £5090.72.

**2. Revision of Asset Register** – Cllr Tony Money (RFO) reported that in May 2022 the ‘Building Sums’ insured was increased by 10%, this year the insurance company have increased the figures by a further 16%. All remaining sums insured remain unchanged. Members unanimously endorsed these revisions to the Asset Register.

**3. PC Insurance arrangements for 2023-24** – Members noted that, as reported by Cllr Tony Money (RFO), the PC had a 3 year long term agreement with Aviva and this would be the second year of the policy.

## 2735. Audit for 2022-23

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 2022-23 PC Accounts** - It was proposed by Cllr Ruth Carter, seconded by Cllr Sarah Mardon and unanimously agreed to approve the 2022-23 PC Accounts.

**3. Consider, approve and sign the Audit Annual Governance Statement** - It was proposed by Cllr David Middleditch, seconded by Cllr Hannah Rumsey and unanimously agreed to approve the Annual Governance Statement for 2022-23. The document was signed by the Chairman and the Clerk.

**4. Consider, approve and sign the Audit Annual Accounting Statements and the Audit Exemption Certificate** - It was proposed by Cllr Ruth Carter, seconded by Cllr David Middleditch and unanimously agreed to approve the Annual Accounting Statements and the Audit Exemption Certificate for 2022-23. 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 6 June to 17 July 2023.

**2736. Quotation to clear the ditch between The Savilles and Cole Green, BSP twice yearly**

The Clerk had not yet been able to contact the other local gardeners/tradesmen so this matter would be considered again at the next meeting.

**2737. ECC Verge Cutting Contract for 2023-24**

Members were pleased to note that ECC had increased the payment for this contract by 8% to £2130.06 after many years remaining unchanged. The Clerk would submit an invoice to ECC and 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.

**2738. Review of Tree Plan for Cole Green**

The Tree Warden, Cllr John Pheby, had examined all the trees on Cole Green and reported that the mature Chestnut trees were all in reasonable condition. Some were showing signs of disease but this had not escalated significantly in the last year. The 2 newly planted Chestnuts were growing well and he had removed the side shoots from the newly planted Cherry which was also doing well. The Platinum Anniversary Oak tree is in good condition. He will recut the ivy on the mature Chestnut opposite the Primary School and will also trim around the newly planted trees and the top of the ditch. Members wished to record their thanks to Cllr Pheby for his continual monitoring and care of the trees. It was unanimously agreed that in the circumstances no further professional work was required at this time and the Plan would be updated accordingly.

**2739. Free Tree Scheme**

The Clerk had obtained details of the Free Tree Scheme which she explained to members. An application must be made to The Woodland Trust for packs of between 15 and 420 mixed whips suitable for various planting sites. The next application deadline is August for delivery in November 2023. The PC must then take responsibility for planting and care of the saplings for the future. It was suggested that the trees might be suitable for a hedgerow or small shrubbery maybe on a corner of the Playing Field or on Cole Green. This would be considered further at the next meeting.

**2740. Consider possible projects suitable for CIF grant application in 2023**

It had previously been suggested that an application could be made to cover the cost of regularly trimming the hedge between the playing field and the access roadway at the rear of Savilles. This would be considered further at the next meeting.

**2741. Playing Field Management Committee**

It was proposed and unanimously agreed that the new PC representative on the PFMC should be Cllr Holly Chaplin.

**2742. Village Design Statement Working Group**

The next meeting of the Working Group would take place tomorrow, 17 May 2023.

**2743. Christmas Tree on Cole Green – Future arrangements**

It was proposed by Cllr Hannah Rumsey, seconded by Cllr David Middleditch and agreed (5 in favour with 2 abstentions) that further discussion of the leaflet drop would be deferred until the September PC meeting.

## **2744. Correspondence**

Members considered the Correspondence List which had been circulated by the Clerk and the following items were noted: Receipt of initial 2023-24 Precept payments (£1875 for BSP and £625 for BO) from BDC: Letter of thanks for donation from Essex and Herts Air Ambulance : Update on proposal to use Wethersfield Airbase to accommodate asylum seekers – BDC application for a High Court injunction was refused on 21 April: Clare Community Information Fair on 17 May: Letter of thanks from King Charles III for condolences expressed on the death of Queen Elizabeth II.

## **2745. Planning applications and decisions**

### **1. New Application**

- 23/00835/HH – Willow House, Vicarage Road, BSP – Creation of first floor to existing garage to enable habitable accommodation (including 2 dormers, 3 Velux and 1 outside staircase). NO COMMENT.

### **2. Decisions**

- 23/00368/TPO – Walnut Tree House, Gages Road, BSP – Reduce crown of Walnut tree (TPO 7/94) by 10-12 foot and trim side to balance the shape. PART GRANTED (Reduce crown by up to 1.5m all round) and PART REFUSED (Reduce the crown by 10-12 feet and trim sides to balance shape).

**3. Solar Farm proposal at Bakers Road, BSP** – Cllr David Middleditch declared a prejudicial interest in this matter. Members noted that the full planning application had not yet been submitted to BDC.

**4. Lamberts Farm, Gages Road, BSP – Request for meeting with the PC** – The landowner’s representative had requested a meeting with the PC to discuss proposals for development at the site, prior to a full planning application being submitted to BDC. After some discussion it was unanimously agreed to meet with the developers to listen to their proposals (but not officially comment on them). The meeting would take place prior to the next PC meeting.

**2746. Public Forum** - No members of the public were present.

## **2747. Urgent matters and proposals for future Agenda**

**1. Flooding on Otten Road and Church Street** – It was agreed to report 2 separate flooding issues in Otten Road (opposite junction with Whitehouse Lane and opposite junction with Footpath 11) to ECC along with the ‘flowing water’ that was running along the northern edge of a section of Church Street.

**2. Car parked on road near Otten Road/ Vicarage Road/ Church Street junction** – Members discussed this potentially dangerous parking situation but after speaking to various official bodies they concluded that no formal action could be taken.

### **Next meeting**

The next Council meeting will be held in The Community House, Gages Road, Belchamp St Paul on Tuesday 4 July at 7.30pm.

The meeting closed at 9.11 pm.

Signed: ..... (Chairman) 4 July 2023