

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

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

**Present:** Councillors David McKee (Chairman), Harvey Bamford, Ruth Carter, Holly Chaplin, Dominic Curran, Robin Lock, David Middleditch, Tony Money and Hannah Rumsey. 1 member of the public was also present. In attendance: Diane Smith (Clerk).

### **2811. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest**

Apologies had been received from Councillors Sarah Mardon and John Pheby, County Councillor Peter Schwier and District Councillor Iona Parker. Cllr David Middleditch declared a prejudicial interest in items 2827.1 (Hole Farm planning application) and 2827.3 (Solar Farm planning application) and left the meeting before these items were discussed.

### **2812. Public Forum**

No matters were raised by the public.

### **2813. Confirmation of the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2023**

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

### **2814. Matters arising from the October PC meeting**

**1. Change to PC bank signatories (Item 2795.1)** – Because of an administrative error the bank had not yet completed this process, but they were expected to do so shortly.

**2. Resumption of Speedwatch sessions (Item 2806)** – 5 residents had confirmed their continued willingness to take part in the sessions and a new Speedwatch device had been provided by Essex Police, because the battery on the previous device had failed. Cllr Dominic Curran confirmed that initial familiarisation sessions would be held with the new device, followed by the resumption of regular sessions (including some in the early mornings). It was noted that sessions could only take place during daylight hours.

**3. Community House hirers using the playing field parking facility (Item 2810.3)** – Cllr Dominic Curran reported that he had spoken to the CH Booking Secretary who had confirmed that, in future, hirers attention would be drawn to the arrangement whereby cars could be parked in the playing field parking area at an additional cost of £30. If they did not choose to take up this option, the CH Conditions of Hire state that all attendee's vehicles must be parked along one side of Gages Road.

### **2815. Essex County Council matters**

Members noted the e-mails that had been received from County Councillor Schwier since the last meeting including 3 relating to flooding issues, the consultation on ECC's Budget Plans for 2024-25, the approval of £121 million additional funding from Government (between now and 2034) for road repairs and the setting up of "Essex Air", a new website to raise awareness of air pollution throughout Essex.

### **2816. Braintree District Council matters**

District Councillor Iona Parker had submitted a report including the following matters: Devolution plans for the creation of a Greater Essex Combined Authority: Wethersfield former airbase – The judicial review for housing asylum seekers at the site had been heard and the judgement decision is

awaited: Off gas network homes – Grants are expected to be available shortly to improve energy efficiency in these homes (targeted at low income households).

**2817. Finance**

| <b>1. The Income and Expenditure List was approved as follows:</b> |  | IN (£) | OUT (£) |
|--|--|--------|---------|
| 18 Oct   | Mrs H Chaplin (PFMC) - Work/materials for pavilion and playing field |        | 777.40  |
| 24 Oct   | E-On – PFMC  |        | 22.06   |
| 30 Oct   | Transfer   | 777.40 |         |
| 30 Oct   | Transfer   | 22.06  |         |
| 31 Oct   | HMRC – Tax on salary   |        | 16.60   |
| 31 Oct   | Diane Smith – Clerk’s salary and expenses                            |        | 190.07  |
| 13 Nov   | P Bowers – Verge cutting contract                                    |        | 884.40  |
| 15 Nov   | Diane Smith – Clerk’s expenses                                       |        | 309.72  |
| 21 Nov   | E-On – PFMC  |        | 18.23   |
| 21 Nov   | Transfer   | 18.23  |         |

Current account balance at 21 November was £5089.21, Deposit account £4918.96, PFMC account £5123.02 and 31-Day Notice account £11078.30.

**2. Initial consideration of budget/precept for 2024-25** – Cllr Tony Money (RFO) reported that the draft budget, which had been circulated to Councillors, covered all routine items of expenditure for the PC. He had received requests for donations from some additional local organisations. However the limited budget meant that the PC could only agree to these if existing donations to other local organisations were reduced/withdrawn and Members were reluctant to do this. At this time, there were no additional significant items of expenditure anticipated during 2024-25. Members were pleased to learn from Cllr Holly Chaplin (Chair of the PFMC) that an agreement had been reached with a team to regularly hire the football pitch for the 2024-25 season. This would produce an additional income of £900 to the PFMC.

**2818. Review of PC Equal Opportunities Policy**

The original policy document, adopted in 2020, had been circulated to Councillors and was discussed. It was proposed by Cllr Ruth Carter, seconded by Cllr Hannah Rumsey and unanimously agreed to re-adopt the policy subject to the following two additions: Under the ‘Employment’ section there would be no discrimination on the grounds of “Ethnicity”, and “volunteers” would be added to the types of employees listed in the second paragraph. The revised document would be published on the PC website and this would be reviewed again in November 2026.

**2819. Review of BDC Potential Open Space Improvement Plan**

The Clerk detailed the items currently included for the villages of BSP and Belchamp Otten, including those added to the BDC document following last year’s review. It was agreed to inform BDC that the PC owned the Playing Field and request that they correct this error on the document. No new items would be put forward for this review.

**2820. Meeting dates for 2024**

The Clerk had circulated a schedule of PC meeting dates for 2024. It was proposed by Cllr Dominic Curran, seconded by Cllr Robin Lock and unanimously agreed that meetings would be held as follows: 16 January, 27 February, 9 April (starting at 8pm), 21 May (Annual Council meeting), 2 July, 3 September, 15 October and 26 November 2024. The BO Annual Assembly would be held on Monday 8 April (at The Red Lion) and the BSP Annual Assembly on 9 April (at 7.30pm followed by

the April PC meeting). All meetings would be held on Tuesday's, commencing at 7.30pm in The Community House unless stated otherwise.

#### **2821. Clerk's future employment plans**

The Clerk informed Councillors that she planned to retire in the next few months and wished to provide advance notice so that a new Clerk could be appointed in good time and there would be a smooth handover. Cllr Tony Money also confirmed that he wished to step down from his long held role of RFO. The Chairman thanked both the Clerk and Cllr Money for all their work in the past on behalf of the PC. Members agreed that a new joint Clerk / RFO should be sought and that the Clerk should prepare a draft advert for submission to EALC, the Parish News magazine, the website and notice boards. This would be approved at the next meeting.

#### **2822. Playing Field Management Committee**

Cllr Holly Chaplin reported that the PFMC had agreed to pay their contractor £750 for the extensive hedge and tree works recently carried out at the playing field. Research had shown that the PFMC Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure (2002) required this payment to be formally approved by the PC. It was proposed by Cllr David Middleditch, seconded by Cllr Dominic Curran and unanimously agreed to approve the payment. It was also agreed to review the PFMC Terms of Reference as some sections of the document were now quite out of date and did not accurately reflect changes that had occurred in recent years.

#### **2823. Local Development Code Working Group**

Cllr Hannah Rumsey reported that the WG were in the process of drafting a questionnaire, with the questions reflecting the feedback received at the recent village exhibitions. It was hoped that the questionnaire/survey would be delivered to every house in both villages, during the early part of 2024.

#### **2824. Car parked on roadway at the junction of Church Street and Otten Road**

The Clerk reported that Cllr John Pheby had still not received any response from Essex Police. It was agreed that the Clerk would contact Eastlight Housing Association to clarify the situation regarding the off-road parking provision at the property involved.

#### **2825. Defibrillator at BSP out of service**

The Clerk had received confirmation from the East of England Ambulance Service (EEAS) that their records continued to show the BSP defibrillator as 'offline'. They would not therefore have made a specific "active" deployment to the BSP defibrillator, to the incident on 5 October 2023, but "sometimes the caller receives the instruction 'if there is a defibrillator available send someone to get it' which may have happened in this instance."

The EEAS also confirmed that the replacement battery request had been logged but that they were currently experiencing supply issues which were causing significant delays. The Clerk had stressed the importance of getting the defibrillator operational again as soon as possible to EEAS. Members agreed that the Clerk should contact the EEAS regularly to obtain updates on the battery situation to try and expedite the replacement battery.

#### **2826. Correspondence**

Members considered the Correspondence List which had been circulated by the Clerk and the following items were noted: Change of name for Sudbury and South Suffolk Citizen's Advice and request for future funding: Change of name for all AONB's to 'National Landscapes'(local AONB's

now renamed Suffolk and Essex Coast and Heaths National Landscape / Dedham Vale National Landscape): PFCC survey asking for resident’s views on investing more in Essex Police and Fire and Rescue services for the 2024-25 financial year: ECC Parking Guidance Consultation – to revise the parking standards guidance for new developments across Essex.

**2827. Planning applications and decisions**

**1. New Applications**

- 23/02694/VAR – Hole Farm, Knowl Green – Variation to Condition 5 (Landscaping) and Condition 8 (Noise Assessment) of approved application 18/02239/FUL – It was proposed by Cllr Robin Lock, seconded by Cllr Dominic Curran and agreed (6 votes for the motion with 2 abstentions) that the PC should OBJECT to this application (insufficient detailed data/information supplied on planting and noise revisions and also existing reported noise problems).

- 23/02784/HH – 14 Hickford Hill, BSP – Single storey side extension. NO COMMENT.

**2. Decisions**

- 23/01806/HH and 23/01919/LBC – 1 Coles Barn, The Street, Belchamp Otten – Proposed conservation style roof lights and oak door, external flue and internal alterations. GRANTED.

- 23/02345/HH – Greengages, Cole Green, BSP – Single storey side extension. REFUSED.

- 23/02301/DAC – Larks Farmhouse, Sewells Lane, Belchamp Otten – Approval of details reserved by Condition 4 of 22/01138/LBC – Replace brick infill to timber frame with wood fibre board insulation and internal lime plaster. External appearance unchanged (render over). GRANTED.

**3. Solar Farm proposal at Bakers Road, BSP – Application 23/01413/FUL**

Members noted that BDC had refused to publish on their website, the PC’s further submission expressing concern about ‘a perceived and/or actual conflict of interest that has arisen regarding BSR and their planning agent’. The reason given by BDC was that the document was “misleading and potentially defamatory”. Members refuted this allegation and it was proposed by Cllr Tony Money, seconded by Cllr Robin Lock and agreed (7 in favour with 1 abstention) that the PC reply to BDC regarding their refusal to publish the document (draft reply circulated to Councillors). It was also unanimously agreed to submit 2 Freedom of Information Requests to BDC.

**2828. Public Forum** – No matters were raised.

**2829. Urgent matters and proposals for future Agenda**

**1. War Memorial** - It was suggested that consideration be given to erecting a War Memorial in the centre of BSP. There is an existing plaque of remembrance in BSP Church but the PCC are in favour of a more central memorial. A recent ‘Poppies on the Green’ service, organised by the PCC, was attended by 60-70 residents. It was agreed that this matter would be discussed at the January PC meeting.

**Next meeting**

The next Council meeting will be held in The Community House, Gages Road, Belchamp St Paul on Tuesday 16 January 2024 at 7.30pm.

The meeting closed at 9.13 pm.

Signed: ..... (Chairman) 16 January 2024