

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

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 16 January 2024 at 7.30pm at  
The Community House, Gages Road, Belchamp St Paul

**Present:** Councillors David McKee (Chairman), Harvey Bamford, Holly Chaplin, Dominic Curran, David Middleditch and Tony Money plus District Councillor Iona Parker (left the meeting after Item 2835). 8 members of the public were also present. In attendance: Diane Smith (Clerk).

Immediately prior to the start of the PC meeting a short presentation had been given, by the applicants and their representative, regarding the planning application for Lamberts Farm, Gages Road, BSP - 23/03005/FUL. [District Cllr Iona Parker did not attend this presentation.]

### **2830. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest**

Apologies had been received from Councillors Ruth Carter, Robin Lock, Sarah Mardon, John Pheby and Hannah Rumsey plus County Councillor Peter Schwier. Cllr Dominic Curran declared a non-prejudicial interest in Item 2836 (Lamberts Farm planning application). Cllr David Middleditch declared a prejudicial interest in Item 2845.3 (Solar Farm planning application) and left the meeting before this item was discussed.

### **2831. Public Forum**

No matters were raised by the public.

### **2832. Confirmation of the Minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2023**

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

### **2833. Matters arising from the November PC meeting**

**1. Change to PC bank signatories (Item 2814.1)** – Cllr Sarah Mardon had been successfully added to the list of bank signatories for the PC current account.

**2. Resumption of Speedwatch sessions (Item 2814.2)** – Cllr Dominic Curran confirmed that one Speedwatch session had taken place since the last meeting and one driver had been reported to Essex Police for exceeding the speed limit. Adverse weather conditions had prevented further sessions from taking place but more would be scheduled for the end of January and February 2024. Additional volunteers were being sought.

**3. Revision of PC Equal Opportunity Policy and BDC Potential Open Space Improvement Plan (Items 2818 and 2819)** – The Clerk confirmed that the revised Equal Opportunity Policy had been published on the PC website and BDC had confirmed that the Parish Council ownership of The Playing Field would be recorded on the BDC Potential Open Space Improvement Plan.

**4. ECC Bus Consultation Result (Item 2795.2)** – Members noted that 24 respondents had objected to the proposal, within the Consultation, to withdraw the DaRT3 service. ECC therefore proposed to withdraw the Service F315 (Sudbury to Halstead) and incorporate those passengers into the DaRT3 scheme to improve its cost effectiveness. The DaRT3 service would accordingly continue until 2026 with the opportunity for a further extension of 2 years. Members wished to record their thanks to residents who had responded to the Consultation and to County Cllr Iona Parker for highlighting the issue.

**5. Reported Highway problems (Items 2793.2 and 2793.3)**– The Clerk reported that ECC had completed permanent pothole repairs in Gages Road (from The Community House to Knowl Green), and extensive ditch clearance works had been undertaken in Otten Road to alleviate the

recurring flooding problem. Flooding problems at Fowes Lane and Knowl Green had been assessed as ‘Routine maintenance’ and ECC were engaging with the householder in Gages Road to rectify the overhanging hedge. The Clerk would check on progress regarding the overhanging hedge at Knowl Green.

#### **2834. Essex County Council matters**

Members noted the e-mails that had been received from County Councillor Schwier since the last Meeting, including the result of the ECC Bus Consultation Review (see Item 2833.4 above) and the Video Guide to Reporting Highway Problems using the What3Words (W3W) platform.

#### **2835. Braintree District Council matters**

District Councillor Iona Parker reported on the following matters: Devolution plans – Essex has been offered a Level 2 Devolution Deal (powers devolved from central government along with additional funding): Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) received £300,000 from government to run a Safer Streets programme. The scheme has been successfully introduced in Witham and produced significant reductions in crime and fear of crime and it will now be introduced in Halstead: BDC Budget for 2024-25 – There are ongoing financial pressures but BDC are focussing on cost savings and increasing income, along with more efficient working and sharing of services to meet the projected 2m budget shortfall over the next 4 years: Revision to National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – This means that District Council’s will no longer need to demonstrate a 5 year housing supply if they have an up to date Local Plan. Braintree have a current Local Plan so will consequently be in a stronger position to resist speculative planning applications: 27,000 households have signed up for the collection of Green Waste from April 2024 which is more than anticipated. From 1 April BDC will no longer collect “side waste” (full bin liners placed next to the black bin): Local Council Tax Support Scheme is being streamlined to provide more support for the lowest income households: DaRT3 scheme will continue. District Cllr Parker will investigate reported problems with passengers contacting the current DaRT3 provider: Sudbury (Babergh D C) is proposing to introduce parking charges at its town centre car parks: Braintree Local Highway Panel have approved the application to install “Deer warning signs” near Mashay Wood. Funding will be available in Autumn 2024. The application to install “Horse rider” signs on Belchamp Road (towards Tilbury juxta Clare) has been approved but precise locations must be agreed before funding is allocated.

The Chairman thanked District Cllr Iona Parker for attending the meeting and delivering her report. She then left the meeting.

#### **2836. Planning application 23/03005/FUL for Lamberts Farm, Gages Road, BSP – Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of 6 dwellings and associated access**

The Chairman agreed to a request to bring this item forward on the Agenda. Following the presentation provided prior to the start of the meeting, Members discussed the application in detail. It was proposed by Cllr Holly Chaplin, seconded by Cllr David Middleditch and unanimously agreed to support the application. The thoughtful layout, good design and screening proposed in the application would enhance the approach to the village from the south west. It would also be sympathetic and proportional for this prominent location which is wholly within the Village Conservation Area and largely within the Village Development Envelope.

#### **2837. Finance**

<b>1. The Income and Expenditure List was approved as follows:</b>	<b>IN (£)</b>	<b>OUT (£)</b>
28 Nov Hannah Rumsey – Printing for VDC Exhibition		8.80

29 Nov	Fred Eady – Litter picking at Belchamp Otten		69.00
29 Nov	Diane Smith – Clerk’s salary and expenses		190.07
29 Nov	HMRC – Tax on salary		16.60
29 Nov	Wendy Bird – Litter picking at BSP		69.00
30 Nov	Transfer	750.00	
1 Dec	Bitten and Gibson – Part of Community House Grant		170.88
1 Dec	Impressions Engine – PFMC		750.00
4 Dec	Robin Lock – Christmas tree items		99.96
21 Dec	E-On – PFMC		17.64
27 Dec	Transfer	17.64	
27 Dec	Anglian Water – PFMC		46.89
27 Dec	Transfer	46.89	
2024			
2 Jan	HMRC – Tax on salary		16.60
2 Jan	Diane Smith – Clerk’s salary and expenses		190.07

Current account balance at 2 January was £4258.23, Deposit account £4929.66, PFMC account £4318.51 and 31-Day Notice account £11117.09.

**2. Vacancy for Clerk/RFO** – Members agreed that Cllr Holly Chaplin should take over the role of RFO for the PC and also discussed and confirmed the working hours and remuneration figure for the new Clerk. The Clerk had prepared and circulated a draft advert for the vacancy. This was approved subject to amendment to reflect the above discussion. This would be published in the weekly EALC job bulletin, the Parish News magazine, Facebook and on the notice boards and the PC website. The deadline for the receipt of applications would be 16 February 2024 and, if possible, interviews would take place before the next PC meeting.

**3. Approval of budget/precept for 2024-25** – Members noted that the appointment of a new Clerk was likely to result in potential extra expenditure during 2024-25, but it was unanimously agreed to cover any such extra spending from reserves in the short term. Members were pleased to have received confirmation from BDC that the Street Scene Agreement scheme would continue, at the same level as last year, for 2024-25. It was proposed by Cllr David Middleditch, seconded by Cllr Harvey Bamford and unanimously agreed to leave the Budget and Precept unchanged from 2023-24. The Precept forms were duly signed by the Chairman requesting £1250 for Belchamp Otten and £3750 for Belchamp St Paul. [These figures would result in the Parish element of the Band D Council Tax Rate being £ 16.52 for Belchamp Otten residents and £22.73 for the residents of BSP].

### **2838. Resignation of Litter Picker for BSP**

Members noted that Wendy Bird had resigned from the litter picker role because of a change in her circumstances and she would finish her duties on 31 January. It was agreed that the Clerk would send her a formal letter of thanks for her diligent work over the past 18 months. It was also agreed to advertise the vacancy in the Parish News magazine, on Facebook and on the notice boards and the PC website. A temporary unpaid volunteer had agreed to undertake some litter picking in BSP until a new permanent arrangement was in place.

### **2839. Playing Field Management Committee**

Cllr Holly Chaplin (Chair of the PFMC) reported that the Secretary of the PFMC had recently stepped down but it was expected that the position would be filled very shortly. She also reported that herself, the RFO and the Clerk would liaise to produce a revised draft of the PFMC Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure for approval by the Council.

#### **2840. Local Development Code Working Group**

Cllr Hannah Rumsey reported that the WG were due to meet the following day, 17 January, to complete the drafting of the VDC questionnaire/survey, which would subsequently be delivered to every house in both villages.

#### **2841. Car parked on roadway at the junction of Church Street and Otten Road**

The Clerk reported that the owner of the dangerously parked vehicle was expected to move out of the property in the next week or so which would hopefully end the problem. Members therefore agreed to continue to monitor the situation.

#### **2842. Defibrillator at BSP out of service**

The Clerk had regularly contacted the East of England Ambulance Service (EEAS) requesting updates on the battery replacement situation but had received no further response. Members found this situation quite unacceptable and it was accordingly agreed to raise the matter with Rt Hon James Cleverly MP and request his assistance to resolve the problem.

#### **2843. Erection of a War Memorial in the centre of BSP**

Residents had raised the suggestion of a War Memorial in the centre of the village with Cllr Holly Chaplin, following the Remembrance 'Poppies on the Green' ceremony which was organised on Cole Green last November. This ceremony, held in a central location within the village, attracted around 60-70 attendees, including staff/children from the Primary School. Members noted that there is an existing Plaque of Remembrance in St Andrews Church, BSP but that this is less accessible for some residents.

Members discussed some possible locations for a Memorial on Cole Green and it was agreed that the Clerk would establish if planning permission would be required if it was sited within the Conservation Area. Cllr Holly Chaplin would research the names on the existing plaque with a view to possibly contacting the families of those named, to obtain their thoughts on the suggestion.

#### **2844. Correspondence**

Members considered the Correspondence List, which had been circulated by the Clerk, and the following items were noted: Review of Members' Registers of Interest ( 3 Councillors had contacted BDC direct to confirm no changes and 6 further Councillors confirmed no changes during the meeting, which the Clerk would report to BDC): 2023-24 Register of Electors published: Planning permission granted for a 'Men's Shed' at Great Yeldham: PC website domain name renewed for a further year at £38.38: CPRE membership due (Members agreed to renew at £36 for a further year): Earls Colne and Halstead Educational Charity – Grants available to individuals, groups and schools: Wethersfield former airbase – Judicial Review decided that the Home Office acted lawfully in its decision to use the base for asylum seekers: New NALC Local Council Model Contract of Employment published.

#### **2845. Planning applications and decisions**

##### **1. New Applications**

- 23/02763/LBC – Coles Farm, The Street, Belchamp Otten – Repaint 19 windows and doors in Farrow and Ball Lichen Green. NO COMMENT.

- 23/03005/FUL – Lamberts Farm, Gages Road, BSP – Demolition of existing farmhouse and erection

of 6 dwellings and associated access. SUPPORT. (See Item 2836 above).

– 22/01212/HH – The Old Rectory, The Street, Belchamp Otten – Non-Material Amendment: Construction of a new glasshouse, potting shed, accompanying cellar and associated walled garden. (Amendment relates to height of the enclosing walls of the walled garden). INFORMATION ONLY.

## **2. Decisions**

- 23/02784/HH – 14 Hickford Hill, BSP – Single storey side extension. GRANTED.

- 23/02438/HH and 23/02439/LBC – Wayside Cottage, Borley Road, Belchamp Otten – Proposed installation of air source heat pump and PV panels. GRANTED.

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

Cllr David Middleditch left the meeting before this Item was discussed.

The PC were awaiting an official response from BDC regarding their refusal to publish the PC's submission covering 'a perceived and/or actual conflict of interest that has arisen regarding BSR and their planning agent'. The 2 Freedom of Information requests were also outstanding. Further research had provided additional information on the law in respect of defamation and a draft 'Defamation clarification' document had been circulated to Members for their consideration. It was proposed by Cllr Tony Money, seconded by Cllr Harvey Bamford and agreed (4 in favour with 1 abstention) to submit the 'Defamation clarification' document to BDC.

Members also noted additional information received, relating to the impact of the proposed solar farm site on adjacent heritage assets and the local population of Skylarks (13 Skylark territories identified within the solar farm site – rated as "of County importance" – Skylark Mitigation Strategy will be required).

### **2846. Public Forum –**

**1. Solar Farm planning application** – Further discussion took place on the impact of the solar farm on adjacent heritage assets including Cutbush Farm, Cutbush Barn and Long Lane.

### **2847. Urgent matters and proposals for future Agenda**

**1. NALC Legal Topic Note 31E** – Members noted the Government's amendment to the Local Government Act 1894 in the form of a new section 19A (as inserted by section 82 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023) which came into force on 26 December 2023. The Government's position is now that 'councils are not prohibited from using powers other than in the 1894 Act for spending money on works to church property or property held for an ecclesiastical charity'.

### **Next meeting**

The next Council meeting will be held in The Community House, Gages Road, Belchamp St Paul on Tuesday 27 February 2024 at 7.30pm.

The meeting closed at 9.25 pm.

Signed: ..... (Chairman) 27 February 2024