

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

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 27 February 2024 at 7.30pm at  
The Community House, Gages Road, Belchamp St Paul

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

### **2848. Apologies for Absence, Declarations of Interest and Resignation of Cllr John Pheby**

Apologies had been received from Councillors Holly Chaplin and David Middleditch plus County Councillor Peter Schwier and District Councillor Iona Parker. There were no Declarations of Interest. Members noted that Cllr John Pheby had reluctantly decided to resign from the PC because other commitments were preventing him from regularly attending Council meetings. The Clerk had informed BDC accordingly and the relevant public notices had been erected. If residents do not request an election to fill the vacant seat on the Council, the PC will be invited, in due course, to fill the seat by co-option. Councillors recorded their thanks to Cllr John Pheby for all his work on behalf of the Council over many years.

### **2849. Public Forum**

- 1. Fly tipping on Church Street, BSP (sharp bend north of St Andrews Church)** – Members were pleased to note that the clothing and other items that had been fly tipped at this location, had now been removed, either by BDC or by concerned residents.
- 2. Litter picking** – Members were pleased to accept the offer from a local resident to collect litter on an ad hoc basis (unpaid). See also Item 2857 below.

### **2850. Confirmation of the Minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2024**

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

### **2851. Matters arising from the January PC meeting**

- 1. Reported Highway problems (Items 2833.5)**– The Clerk reported that the overhanging hedges in both Gages Road and Knowl Green had now been cut back by the respective landowners. Members were disappointed to learn that ECC had assessed that the reported ruts and standing water in Long Lane (PROW Byway 2) “are normal for PROW in winter” and that no further action would therefore be taken.
- 2. Precept for 2024-25 (Item 2837.3)** – BDC had confirmed that by leaving the Precept totals unchanged from the current year, the PC element in Council Tax for BSP residents would remain unchanged at £22.73 (+/- 0%) but the payment for Belchamp Otten residents would drop by -1.96% to £16.52 because of a change in the Tax Base figure.
- 3. Car parked on roadway at the junction of Church Street and Otten Road (Item 2841)** – The Clerk reported that the owner of the offending vehicle had moved away from the village at the end of January and no further problems had been experienced. Members wished to record their disappointment in the lack of assistance from Essex Police with this matter and in particular the failure of Essex Police to respond to PC e-mails on the subject.
- 4. TPO Protected tree cut down at Fowes Lane, Belchamp Otten (Item 2810)** – The PC reported this problem to BDC in November 2023 and BDC Landscape Officers have confirmed that the felled tree was indeed subject to a TPO. BDC have however been unable to identify the owner of the land

and have requested the PC's assistance. Councillors were unable to provide this information but the Chairman agreed to make enquiries with residents living in Fowes Lane.

#### **2852. Essex County Council matters**

Members noted the e-mails that had been received from County Councillor Schwier since the last meeting including the 90% increase in the number of pothole repairs undertaken by ECC in 2023, repairs numbered 11,949 in 2023 compared to 6,280 in 2022.

#### **2853. Braintree District Council matters**

District Councillor Iona Parker's report focussed on the following matters: BDC budget for 2024-25 approved at £19.6m – Despite ongoing financial pressures and increased demand for services BDC remains in a sound financial position: BDC are looking at ways to address the forecast budget deficit of £2.3m over the next 4 years by developing a 'Fit for the Future' transformation programme to use resources more effectively: the BDC element of Council Tax in 2024-25 will rise by 2.96% which represents an 11p per week increase for a Band D property: Councillor Community Grants are to continue (£1250 per Councillor per Ward): Street Cleansing Grants to Parish Councils are to continue for 2024-25: the garden waste subscription service has proved popular bringing in an income of around £900,000 to BDC: BDC is looking into charging a Council Tax Premium of 100% on second homes in the District from 1 April 2025: BDC has updated its Livewell Health and Wellbeing Strategy to focus on prevention and early intervention of health conditions.

#### **2854. Finance**

<b>1. The Income and Expenditure List was unanimously approved as follows:</b>		<b>IN (£)</b>	<b>OUT (£)</b>
23 Jan	E-On – PFMC		19.50
30 Jan	Fred Eady – Litter picking at Belchamp Otten		69.00
30 Jan	HMRC – Tax on salary		16.60
30 Jan	Diane Smith – Clerk's salary and expenses		190.07
30 Jan	Wendy Bird – Litter picking at BSP		69.00
5 Feb	Transfer	19.50	
20 Feb	Parish News – Advert		15.00
21 Feb	E-On – PFMC		19.58
26 Feb	Transfer	19.58	

Current account balance at 26 February was £3898.56, Deposit account £4935.10, PFMC account £4284.19 and 31-Day Notice account £11150.33.

#### **2. Section 106 funds –** The Clerk reported that BDC had reminded the PC that £1046.

54 was currently being held by them as unspent Section 106 funds. The deadline for spending these funds is February 2025. Members discussed possible projects and it was agreed that Cllr Dominic Curran would obtain quotes for proposed regeneration works to the tennis courts at The Community House. This, and any other suitable projects, would be discussed further at the next PC meeting.

#### **3. PC consider placing a regular article in Parish News –** Members discussed the merits of placing a regular monthly article in Parish News, at a cost of £15 for 1 page. Because the PC does not meet every month it was however agreed to place articles in the magazine as required.

#### **2855. Vacancy for PC Clerk**

Members noted that interviews for the Clerk's position were being arranged and that the Interview Panel would consist of the Chairman and Vice Chair.

## **2856. RFO role handover**

Members noted that Cllrs Tony Money and Holly Chaplin had arranged to meet tomorrow (28 February) to discuss the handover of the RFO duties. Cllr Money would be responsible for concluding all financial arrangements for the 2023-24 Financial Year and Cllr Holly Chaplin would take responsibility for the 2024-25 Financial Year.

## **2857. Vacancy for Litter Picker for BSP**

Members noted that 6 applications had been received from local residents for the Litter Picker vacancy. The Chairman and Clerk were considering these applications. Having sought advice, and following the precedent of other PC's, Members agreed that for Health and Safety reasons the position would only be suitable for applicants aged 18 or over.

## **2858. Playing Field Management Committee**

**1. Review of Terms of Reference for PFMC** - Cllr Tony Money highlighted that the Terms of Reference required at least 2 PC representatives on the PFMC but there had only been 1 PC representative for some years. One Councillor expressed a potential interest in joining the PFMC and it was agreed to discuss this matter further at the next PC meeting.

## **2859. Local Development Code Working Group**

Cllr Hannah Rumsey reported that the WG had met twice in recent weeks to work on the VDC questionnaire/survey. Once complete, Members agreed that the draft survey would be circulated to all Councillors, for them to undertake a trial completion, to test its robustness before it is delivered to every house in both villages.

## **2860. Defibrillator at BSP out of service**

The Clerk reported that the East of England Ambulance Service (EEAS) had arranged for her to collect a new battery from Haverhill Ambulance Station. However, because of a technical failure and the short notice given, she had not received the message until after the appointed date. When she made contact with the EEAS they had already distributed all available batteries to other recipients. The Clerk apologised for missing this opportunity but the circumstances were outside her control.

It was agreed to investigate the availability and cost of the PC purchasing a battery for the defibrillator themselves and also to raise the matter with Rt Hon James Cleverly MP and request his assistance to resolve the problem.

## **2861. Erection of a War Memorial in the centre of BSP**

Members noted that BDC had confirmed that full planning permission would be required if a War Memorial was erected within the Conservation Area at BSP. This would incur costs likely to be in the region of £350. In the absence of Cllr Holly Chaplin it was agreed to consider this matter again at the next meeting.

## **2862. Speedwatch Group**

Cllr Dominic Curran informed members that two Speedwatch sessions had recently taken place and a total of 7 vehicles had been reported to Essex Police for exceeding the speed limit. Three of the vehicles had been travelling in excess of 40 mph. Further volunteers were required to enable

regular sessions to be scheduled and it was agreed to advertise this on the notice boards and the website.

### **2863. Correspondence**

Members considered the Correspondence List, which had been circulated by the Clerk, and the following items were noted: BDC Garden waste bin stickers will be sent out to everyone who has paid for a Green waste collection in 2024-25: Community Infrastructure Grants will be available soon (The Community House trustees are aware): NALC have been informed that the prescribed sum for Section 137 (4)(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 for the 2024-25 financial year is £10.81 (formerly the 'Free 2p'): NALC are lobbying banks to provide a more tailored service to Local Councils to enable council's to discharge their statutory financial duties under the LGA 1972 and the Audit regulations: The Government is providing a framed official portrait of King Charles III to local councils [Agreed to order a framed portrait to be hung in the Community House]: Essex Police Community Payback Projects Scheme – Members discussed submitting an application for the cleaning/ clearing of vegetation around all roadside signs but it was proposed by Cllr Harvey Bamford, seconded by Cllr Robin Lock and agreed not to make an application because of the lack of suitable facilities for the team to use (3 in favour of the motion, 1 against and 4 abstentions).

### **2864. Planning applications and decisions**

**1. New Applications** – No new applications had been received since the last meeting.

#### **2. Decisions**

- 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). GRANTED.
- 23/02763/LBC – Coles Farm, The Street, Belchamp Otten – Repaint 19 windows and doors in Farrow and Ball Lichen Green. GRANTED.
- 23/02694/VAR – Hole Farm, Knowl Green – Vary condition 5 (landscaping) and condition 8 (noise assessment for biomass plant) from original application. WITHDRAWN BY APPLICANT.

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

The Clerk updated members on recent developments – She had submitted the "Response 2" (Defamatory clarification) document to BDC, as approved at the last meeting, and been informed that they were seeking a legal opinion on the matter from the BDC Legal Team. On 25 January BDC had responded to the 2 Freedom of Information requests.

On 23 January BDC had formally launched a re-consultation on the solar farm application, following receipt of multiple revised and additional documents from the applicants. After consulting with the Chairman, the Clerk had requested an extension to the deadline for comments to be submitted on this re-consultation until after the date of this meeting. BDC had subsequently approved an extension to 6 March for PC comments.

Three separate draft responses had been circulated to Councillors in advance of the meeting, each covering a different aspect of the re-consultation. "Submission 3" relates to the applicant's Addendum to the Sequential Site Report, "Submission 4" relates to new evidence on the impact on Heritage Assets and "Submission 5" relates to ECC Place Services' Archaeological Advice/ Report. The three documents were discussed and it was proposed by Cllr Sarah Marsdon, seconded by Cllr Tony Money and unanimously agreed to submit the three documents to BDC.

Members discussed the BDC's continued failure to publish the PC's "Submission 2" on their website or provide the PC with a satisfactory explanation for not doing so. It was proposed by Cllr Dominic Curran, seconded by Cllr Sarah Mardon and unanimously agreed to submit a formal complaint

letter to BDC regarding this failure to publish. A draft Complaint Letter would be circulated to Councillors for their formal approval prior to being sent to BDC.

**2865. Public Forum** – No further matters were raised.

**2866. Urgent matters and proposals for future Agenda**

**1. Horseriding on Cole Green** – Members noted that a horse had recently been ridden at speed across Cole Green causing some damage to the soft wet surface of the Green. The Clerk confirmed that the PC owned Cole Green and that Byelaws had been implemented some years ago to protect the Green from inappropriate usage. The Clerk would provide a copy of the byelaws to the Chairman for him to study.

**2. Notice board inside the bus shelter on Cole Green** – The plastic fronted doors to the notice board had become very discoloured with age and members agreed that a local handyman should be engaged to replace the plastic inserts.

**Next meetings**

The Belchamp Otten Annual Assembly will be held in The Red Lion, Fowes Lane, Belchamp Otten on Monday 8 April at 7.30pm and the BSP Annual Assembly will be held in The Community House, Gages Road, BSP on Tuesday 9 April at 7.30pm.

The next Council meeting will be held in The Community House on Tuesday 9 April 2024 at 8.00pm (immediately after the BSP Annual Assembly).

The meeting closed at 8.52 pm.

Signed: ..... (Chairman) 9 April 2024