

BELCHAMP ST PAUL AND BELCHAMP OTTEN PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 9 April 2024 at 7.30pm at
The Community House, Gages Road, Belchamp St Paul

Present: Councillors Sarah Mardon (Acting Chair), Ruth Carter, Dominic Curran, Holly Chaplin, Tony Money and Hannah Rumsey. 2 members of the public were also present. In attendance: Diane Smith (Existing Clerk) and John Douglass (New Clerk).

2867. Apologies for Absence, Declarations of Interest and Resignation of Cllr Harvey Bamford

Apologies had been received from Councillors David McKee (Chairman) and Robin Lock plus County Councillor Peter Schwier and District Councillor Iona Parker. Cllr David Middleditch declared a prejudicial interest in Item 2882.3 and left the meeting before this Item was discussed.

Members noted that Cllr Harvey Bamford had recently submitted his resignation from the PC as he was moving away from the village. Councillors recorded their thanks to Cllr Harvey Bamford for all his work on behalf of the Council during his term of office. The Clerk had informed BDC of the resignation and the relevant public notices had been erected the previous day. 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.

2868. Public Forum – No matters were raised by the public in attendance.

2869. Confirmation of the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2024

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

2870. Matters arising from the February PC meeting

1. TPO Protected tree cut down at Fowes Lane, Belchamp Otten (Item 2851.4) – Enquiries had not provided any further information on the ownership of the land on which the tree stood. The Clerk would inform BDC accordingly.

2. Vacancy for Litter Picker (Item 2857) – The Clerk had offered the role to the first of the six applicants but had learnt, that morning, that they were no longer in a position to take up the role. She had subsequently offered the role to the second applicant to apply and was awaiting their response.

3. Framed portrait of King Charles III (Item 2863) – The portrait of the King had been received that morning by the Clerk. Members recorded their thanks to the Government for providing the portrait free of charge to local councils, which was much appreciated. The portrait would be hung in The Community House.

4. Notice Board inside the bus shelter on Cole Green (Item 2866.2) – In the absence of the Chairman no update was available. This would be considered again at the next meeting.

2871. Essex County Council matters

Members noted the e-mails that had been received from County Councillor Schwier since the last PC Meeting. County Councillor Schwier had delivered a full Annual Report covering 2023-24 at the BSP Annual Assembly which immediately preceded this meeting.

2872. Braintree District Council matters

District Councillor Iona Parker had delivered a full Annual Report covering 2023-24 at the BSP Annual Assembly which immediately preceded this meeting.

2873. Finance

1. The Income and Expenditure List was unanimously approved as follows:		IN (£)	OUT (£)
29 Feb	HMRC – Tax on salary		16.60
29 Feb	P3 Footpath Group expenses		24.80
29 Feb	Diane Smith – Clerk’s salary and expenses		286.44
6 Mar	ECC – Re-imburement of P3 Expenses	24.80	
7 Mar	ECC – Re-imburement of P3 Expenses	85.64	
11 Mar	BSP Parochial Church Council – Grant		550.00
15 Mar	BSP Community House		262.60
15 Mar	Belchamp Otten Parochial Church Council – Grant		415.00
15 Mar	Sudbury Citizen’s Advice Bureau – Grant		50.00
15 Mar	Essex and Herts Air Ambulance - Grant		250.00
18 Mar	Transfer to Deposit Account		100.00
18 Mar	Aurora Security – Part of Community House grant		168.00
18 Mar	The Community House – Hire of room for PC meetings		180.00
21 Mar	E-On – PFMC		17.05
22 Mar	CPRE subscription 2024		36.00
25 Mar	Anglian Water – PFMC		50.50
25 Mar	Transfer	17.05	
25 Mar	Transfer	50.50	
27 Mar	HMRC – Tax on salary		16.06
27 Mar	Diane Smith – Clerk’s salary and expenses		190.07
28 Mar	Fred Eady – Litter picking at Belchamp Otten		69.00
4 Apr	EALC subscription for 2024		137.55

Current account balance at 4 April was £1266.88, Deposit account £5040.55, PFMC account £4221.58 and 31-Day Notice account £11180.58.

2. Section 106 funds – Members considered the 3 quotes that had been obtained for regeneration works to the tennis courts in the grounds of The Community House. No other projects were put forward for the Section 106 funds. It was unanimously agreed to submit a claim to BDC to spend the outstanding Section 106 monies, totalling £1046, towards the cost of regenerating works to the tennis courts. The Tennis Club had agreed to fund any remaining balance for the project.

3. 2023-24 Year End PC Accounts – Members noted the provisional 2023-24 year end account figures which had been prepared by the RFO and circulated to councillors in advance of the meeting. These would be submitted to the Internal Auditor, for his approval, on the following day.

4. PFMC Proposed budget for 2024-25 – The proposed PFMC budget for 2024-25 had been circulated to councillors prior to the meeting. It was proposed by Cllr Ruth Carter, seconded by Cllr David Middleditch and unanimously agreed to approve the budget as drafted.

5. 2023-24 Audit process – The External Auditor, PKF Littlejohn, had confirmed that the deadline for submitting the AGAR documents for the 2023-24 Audit would be 1 July 2024. The AGAR documents would therefore need to be approved at the next PC meeting on 28 May.

6. BDC Street Scene Partnership for 2024-25 – Members unanimously agreed to continue with the Street Scene Partnership for 2024-25. The Clerk would accordingly sign the Agreement and return it to BDC along with an Activity Report for 2023-24 and a PC invoice for £1377. The 2024 Road Sweeping schedule would be publicised on the village notice boards and the PC website.

2874. Vacancy for PC Clerk

Members noted that John Douglass had been appointed as the new PC Clerk and members welcomed him to the PC. The new Clerk would commence duties on 1 April to provide a handover period with the existing Clerk who would be retiring on 15 April 2024. Members agreed a remuneration package for the new Clerk [NOTE: Both the new and existing Clerk's left the room whilst this was being discussed]. A draft Contract of Self Employment was considered and, once finalised, this would be signed at the next meeting. Members unanimously agreed to change the date of the next meeting from 21 May to Tuesday 28 May because the new Clerk was not available on the original date. Members also agreed unanimously that the new Clerk should attend a 'New Clerk's course', run by EALC on 31 July. An application would be made for an EALC bursary to cover a large part of the cost of the course.

2875. Co-Option process to fill vacant Councillor seat to represent BSP

The Clerk reported that BDC had formally instructed the PC to fill the vacant seat by co-option. The vacancy would be advertised on the notice boards, the PC website and in Parish News. Members noted that a second Co-Option process was likely to be approved, in due course, to fill the seat vacated by Harvey Bamford.

2876. Playing Field Management Committee - Review of Terms of Reference

Cllr Holly Chaplin, Chair of the PFMC, had drafted a revised Terms of Reference document and circulated it to the RFO and the Clerk for comment. Once finalised the document will be approved and signed at the May PC meeting. Members thanked Cllr Hannah Rumsey for volunteering to become the second PC representative on the PFMC.

2877. Local Development Code Working Group

The draft survey had been circulated to Members by Cllr Hannah Rumsey. Having trialled the document a few modifications were suggested by councillors and would be actioned. Three quotes had been obtained for printing the survey and it was unanimously agreed to have 300 copies of the survey printed at a cost of approximately £150. Everyone who completed and returned the survey could opt to be entered into a Prize Draw with 2 prizes consisting of vouchers to be spent in the local public houses. It was hoped to distribute the survey in the next few weeks.

2878. Speedwatch Group

Cllr Dominic Curran reported that no further Speedwatch sessions had been held because of a combination of adverse weather conditions and other commitments. Further sessions were however planned shortly. An article requesting more Speedwatch volunteers would be placed in Parish News.

2879. Defibrillators

1. BSP defibrillator out of service - The Clerk had continued to chase the EEAS (East of England Ambulance Service) to supply the required new battery. She had also investigated the possibility of the PC purchasing a new battery and raised the matter with Rt Hon James Cleverly MP. It was agreed to also investigate the cost of purchasing a new defibrillator or of obtaining a Lottery Grant to fund the purchase. This would be considered at the next meeting.

2. Belchamp Otten defibrillator – Members noted that the annual inspection of the defibrillator had been carried out by the Community Heartbeat Trust and repairs had been completed at the

same time to secure the bottom shelf in the cabinet. An invoice had been received from CHT (totalling £162) to cover the annual maintenance agreement commitment.

2880. Erection of a War Memorial in the centre of BSP

Cllr Holly Chaplin suggested that a trial take place whereby in November 2024 a temporary 6 foot high wooden cross is erected on Cole Green accompanied by a separate plaque commemorating those from the village who were killed in conflicts in the twentieth century. This would then provide a focal point for the 2024 Remembrance event. The provision of a permanent structure could then be discussed after the event, including feedback from residents. The erection of a temporary cross and plaque was proposed by Cllr Dominic Curran, seconded by Cllr David Middleditch and agreed (6 in favour with 1 abstention). The matter will be discussed again at the January 2025 PC meeting.

2881. Correspondence

Members considered the Correspondence List, which had been circulated by the Clerk, and the following items were noted: Election taking place on 2 May for the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner : EALC/NALC membership subscription due for 2024-25 of £137.55 : RCCE Essex Village of the Year competition resuming after 4 year break [Agreed NOT to enter this year] : Letter of thanks for donation received from the Essex and Herts Ambulance Service : Department of Transport Night Flights Consultation [Agreed to submit an objection to the proposal to remove all restrictions on night flights at Stansted Airport].

2882. Planning applications and decisions

1. New Applications:

- 24/00560/HH – 1 Park Farm Cottages, Tilbury Road, Ovington - Erection of part single storey, part 2 storey rear and side extension. NO COMMENT
- 24/00594/FUL – Shearing Place, Shearing Place Road, BSP – Replacement rural workers dwelling with associated landscaping and operational development. It was proposed by Cllr Ruth Carter, seconded by Cllr Dominic Curran and agreed to make NO COMMENT (4 in favour of the proposal, 2 against with 1 abstention)

2. Decisions - No new decisions had been notified since the last meeting.

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

The Clerk updated members on recent developments – Nothing further had been heard from BDC. The Clerk had submitted a request to BDC that they upload the PC's 3 most recent documents (Submission 3, Submission 4 and Submission 5) separately onto the planning portal rather than combining them all together into one document. [See Item 2882.3 from 27 February 2024 PC meeting for further information on the content of the documents].

The Clerk had also submitted a Notice of Complaint letter to BDC advising them that a formal complaint would be submitted if they continued to fail to publish the PC's "Submission 2" on their website or provide the PC with a satisfactory explanation for not doing so.

Members had suggested a few minor changes (mainly spelling, grammar and typing errors) to the formal Complaint Letter circulated after the last meeting. These errors had been corrected and it was proposed by Cllr Tony Money, seconded by Cllr Ruth Carter and agreed (4 in favour with 2 abstentions) to send the letter to BDC if they failed to respond to the Notice of Complaint Letter detailed above.

2883. Public Forum – No further matters were raised.

2884. Urgent matters and proposals for future Agenda

1. Combining the BSP Annual Assembly and the April PC meeting in future – Cllr Tony Money suggested that in future years the two meetings should be held on separate evenings as there was increased content for both meetings in recent years and this led to the combined meetings lasting more than 2.5 hours in total.

Next meetings

The next Council meeting will be held in The Community House on Tuesday 28 May 2024 at 7.30pm. [NOTE: Change of date for this meeting].

The meeting closed at 10.01 pm.

Signed: (Chairman) 28 May 2024