

Belchamp St Paul and Belchamp Otten Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 15th April 2025 at 7:30 pm at the Community House,
Gages Road, Belchamp St Paul

Present: Councillors David McKee (Chairman), Ruth Carter, Holly Chaplin, Dominic Curran, and Tony Money. In attendance: Cllr Peter Schwier (Essex County Council), and John Douglass (Clerk).

3044 Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest. Apologies were received from Cllrs Alex Bills, Robin Lock, Sarah Mardon, David Middleditch, Hannah Rumsey, and Iona Parker (Braintree District Council). A declaration of interest was made by the Clerk in respect of item 3059 – Clerk’s Contract.

3045 PUBLIC DISCUSSION TIME (5 minutes). No matters were raised.

3046 Approval of the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2025. *A resolution to approve the 25/3/25 minutes was proposed by Cllr Carter, seconded by Cllr Curran, and passed unanimously.*

3047 Matters arising from the March PC meeting (not covered separately on the Agenda). No matters were raised.

3048 Essex County Council matters. Cllr Schwier gave a report to the meeting, highlighting: 1) work in clearing and cleaning overgrown road signage, and reporting links to the ECC website; 2) ECC electricity solar power downward auction for residents; 3) progress in the road resurfacing programme to tackle potholes and other defects; 4) increase in planned household waste recycling.

3049 Braintree District Council matters. The Clerk read Cllr Parker’s report which referred to the mobile rural community supermarket launching 28/4/25. This is to assist cost of living for local residents in rural areas and will operate in Stour Valley North and 3 other wards.

3050 Finance – Approval of receipts and payments. Cllr Chaplin (RFO) reported that payments were up to date at 31/3/25, the accounting year end. Current bank statements were laid before the Councillors.

- **2024/25 Accounts & Audit.** Draft accounts for the 2024/25 year have been circulated to Councillors for their perusal. The Chairman thanked Cllr Money for his assistance in preparing the figures. Approval of the accounts by resolution should be tabled at the 20/5/25 PC meeting. The AGAR reporting process deadline set by external auditor PKF Littlejohn is 1/7/25.
- **Accounting for PPMC.** The current system is longstanding and effective and should be continued.

3051 Vacant BSP Councillor seat. A local resident has expressed an interest in the matter.

3052 PPMC – Review of Terms of Reference – update. Cllr Chaplin suggested that the Playing Field Management Committee should be a Working Group rather than a formal committee. This would streamline the organisation and be a more efficient structure. However, this may have an impact on the insurance cover enjoyed by the P C. The Clerk was instructed to seek advice from the Essex Association of Local Councils to address the issue.

3053 Local Development Code Working Group – update. No update was available.

3054 Speedwatch & traffic – parking on Cole Green access. Councillors discussed the problem of delivery van traffic on Bakers Cut, adjacent to Cole Green. A practical solution would be signage plus white-topped plastic posts.

3055 Defibrillators. Monthly checks indicate the two machines are in working order.

3056 Belchamp Otten village sign. No update was available.

3057 Repair of Hickford Hill notice board. Possible sources of funding are: 1) Cllr Parker's Community Grant Fund, or 2) a section 106 capital regeneration grant from Braintree D C. The next step will be to obtain quotations for the work.

3058 Correspondence. A schedule of correspondence since the last meeting has been circulated to Councillors.

3059 Clerk's Contract. (The Clerk left the room for the discussion). The existing contract expired on 31/3/25. The Clerk has requested a new contract for 12 months commencing 1/4/25. *A resolution to grant a new contract was proposed by Cllr Curran, seconded by Cllr Money, and approved unanimously.* The Clerk was instructed to prepare a new contract, on similar terms but reflecting the new UK National Minimum Wage of £12.21 per hour, for consideration at the 20/5/25 PC meeting. A note of thanks to the Clerk was tabled by the Chairman for his work over the past year.

3060 Planning – New Applications / Decisions.

25/00815/TPOCON. 1 Otten Rd, Belchamp Otten – Request to fell a crab apple tree – determination 20/5/25.

3061 PUBLIC DISCUSSION TIME (5 minutes). No matters were raised.

3062 Any urgent matters and proposals for future agenda items. Dog waste bin at Knowl Green: the bin was installed, but in the wrong place. It has been moved to the correct location but is lying on the ground. The Clerk was instructed to ask Braintree D C to reinstall the post and bin at the correct site (What3Words: clocked.cultivation.lollipop).

3063 The next Council meeting will be held on Tuesday 20 May 2025 at 7:30pm in The Community House, Gages Road, Belchamp St Paul.

The meeting closed at 8:20 pm.

Signed (Chairman)

20 May 2025