

Belchamp St Paul and Belchamp Otten Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 13 January 2026 commencing at 7.28 pm in St Andrews Church, Belchamp St Paul.

Present: Councillors David McKee (Chairman), Ruth Carter, Dominic Curran, Lucy Hood, Claire Middleditch, David Middleditch, Jay Stevens, Holly Chaplin, Tony Money, Hannah Rumsey.

In attendance: Cllr Dominic Curran (Acting Clerk).

3174 Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest. John Douglass (Clerk), Cllr Iona Parker (Braintree D C), Cllr Peter Schwier (Essex C C).

3175 PUBLIC DISCUSSION TIME (5 minutes). One member of the public was present. Mr Robert Bowden gave a brief presentation concerning his interest in becoming a councillor for Belchamp Otten. *A resolution inviting Mr Bowden to join the Parish Council was proposed by Cllr Rumsey, seconded by Cllr Claire Middleditch, and passed unanimously.*

3176 Approval of the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2025. *A resolution to approve the minutes was proposed by Cllr David Middleditch, seconded by Cllr Rumsey, and passed unanimously.*

3177 Matters arising from the November PC meeting (not covered separately on the agenda). The members of the Playing Field Working Group should be formally minuted, ie: Cllrs Chaplin (chairman), Claire Middleditch, Curran, Hood, Rumsey, and Stevens.

3178 Essex County Council matters. Cllr Schwier's emails were circulated to Councillors on 5/1/26.

3179 Braintree District Council matters. The acting clerk read Cllr Parker's report. It will be published on the website.

3180 Essex Community Foundation donation. The acting clerk read Martha Kools' email of 1/10/25 concerning the Community Benefit Fund.

3181 Finance – Approval of receipts and payments. RFO Cllr Chaplin's report will be presented shortly by email. **Rental agreement** re Lambert's Farm development vehicles: the agreement is with the new contractor Silversmith Homes for agreement and signing (however, at present the parking facility is not being used).

2026/27 budget & precept. A precept of £6,250 based on the budget circulated to councillors on 3/1/26 was discussed. This represents an increase of £1,250 (or 25%) over the 2025/26 amount. The precept would result in the following annual amounts payable by council tax payers in respect of a Band D property: Belchamp St Paul £28.00 Belchamp Otten £20.63. *A resolution to approve the precept at £6,250 was proposed by Cllr Carter, seconded by Cllr David Middleditch, and passed unanimously.*

3182 Local Development Code Working Group – update. The draft document has been completed and will be circulated by Cllr Rumsey on 14/1/26, with comments requested by the end of January. The document will also be publicised by advert in the Village Magazine, the public notice boards, and on the website. The Chairman moved a vote of thanks to Cllr Rumsey for the considerable effort required by the project.

3183 Speedwatch & traffic. No Speedwatch sessions have been held in December or early January.

3184 Defibrillators. No problems experienced with the BSP machine. BO defib: a resident of Belchamp Otten has offered to take over the monthly check from Sarah Mardon.

3185 Belchamp Otten village sign. No developments were reported.

3186 Repair of Hickford Hill notice board. The new board was erected on 17/12/25 by Middleton Joinery Ltd at a cost of £1,075 plus VAT. The chairman moved a vote of thanks to Cllr Curran and Clerk John Douglass for their work in this matter.

3187 Flooding. No new incidents have been reported.

3188 Correspondence. Correspondence was circulated to Councillors on 5/1/26.

3189 Planning – New Applications / Decisions.

Hobarts Hall, Borley Rd, Otten, 25/02587/NMA. Proposed extension – insert 2 X first floor windows. Granted 4/12/25.

Shearing Place, BSP. 25/02847/FUL. Proposed agricultural building for straw storage. *Comments by 20/1/26. Determination 16/2/26.*

3190 PUBLIC DISCUSSION TIME (5 minutes). A leaflet prepared by the Community House trustees was circulated to councillors. This document will be distributed to all households, inviting residents to an open evening at the Community House on 25/2/26 to view the energy saving improvements installed.

3191 Any urgent matters and proposals for future agenda items. Cllr Hood raised the issue of the legality of union flags attached to a telegraph pole in Church St, BSP. The Chairman stated that this was not a matter for the Parish Council. Cllr Hood will pursue the matter on a personal basis.

3192 The next Council meeting will be held on Tuesday 31 March 2026 at 7:30pm in the Community House, Gages Rd, Belchamp St Paul.

The meeting closed at. .8.03 pm. . .

Signed (Chairman)

31 March 2026.