

Belchamp St Paul and Belchamp Otten Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 31 March 2026 commencing at 7.30pm in the Community House, Gages Road, Belchamp St Paul.

Present: Councillors David McKee (Chairman), Rob Bowden, Dominic Curran, Claire Middleditch, & Tony Money.

In attendance: John Douglass (Clerk).

3193 Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest. Cllrs Ruth Carter, Holly Chaplin, David Middleditch, & Jay Stevens. Apologies were also received from Cllr Iona Parker (Braintree DC), and Cllr Peter Schwier (Essex CC).

A declaration of interest in point 3208 (Planning – Hole Farm and Solar Farm) was made by Cllr Claire Middleditch.

The Chairman welcomed Cllr Bowden to the Council. The Chairman also expressed thanks to Hannah Rumsey (resigned as a councillor on 10/3/26) and Ruth Carter (resigned on 31/3/26) for their sterling service to the Council. (Note: Holly Chaplin also resigned as a councillor effective 1/4/26).

3194 PUBLIC DISCUSSION TIME (5 minutes). Six members of the public were in attendance. Concern was raised about the Lamberts Farm development opposite the Community House whereby parked vans and large builders' delivery lorries were causing damage to the grass verges and a traffic nuisance in Gages Road. (See point 3202 for details).

3195 Approval of the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2026. *A resolution to approve the minutes was proposed by Cllr Curran, seconded by Cllr Bowden, and passed unanimously.*

3196 Matters arising from the January PC meeting (not covered separately on the agenda). No matters were raised.

3197 Essex County Council matters. Emails received from Cllr Schwier were circulated to Councillors on 24/3/26.

3198 Braintree District Council matters. Cllr Parker has indicated she will give a full report at the Annual Parish Assembly.

3199 Essex Community Foundation donation. No matters were reported.

3200 Finance – Approval of receipts and payments. Cllr Money provided Councillors with annotated bank statements for the period 20/10/25 to 31/3/26. (These will be attached to the minutes). *A resolution to approve the document was proposed by Cllr Curran, seconded by Cllr Middleditch, and passed unanimously.* Cllr Money also provided draft Parish Council accounts for the year ended 31/3/26; schedules of bank receipts and payments for the year; and a schedule of Playing Field Management Committee bank receipts and payments. The Chairman expressed his thanks to Cllr Money for this considerable amount of work. By email Cllr Chaplin expressed thanks on behalf of Belchamp Otten Parish Church for the Council's donation of £415.

The Clerk reported that the 2025/26 audit timetable and documents have been received from PKF Littlejohn. On this occasion the Council's accounts will be included in the 5% sample of smaller authorities for Intermediate Review.

3201 Local Development Code Working Group – update. The Local Development Code (or Design Code) draft was distributed to Councillors on 14/1/26 and was published on the website, on the notice boards, and in the Parish news in February. There will now be a consultation process with Braintree D C. *A resolution to approve the document was proposed by Cllr Curran, seconded by Cllr Bowden, and passed unanimously.* The Chairman expressed the appreciation of the Council for the large volume of detailed work undertaken by Hannah Rumsey and Diane Smith.

3202 Speedwatch & traffic. No Speedwatch sessions have been held since the last meeting.

The Clerk reported that potholes and verge damage in Shearing Place Road have been repaired by Essex C C. It was noted that Solar Farm delivery lorries caused severe disruption in Jan and Feb. This is reported in more detail in point 3208 – Planning.

Deliveries of builders' materials to the Lambert Farm/Michael's Yard site opposite the Community House have caused traffic problems, and rutted grass on the green. The Clerk wrote a letter of complaint to Silversmith Homes, the contractor, on 14/2/26. They have agreed to make good the grass once major building supply deliveries have been completed. In the meantime, they have agreed to use a banksman to control deliveries to avoid traffic chaos, and furthermore they have requested implementation of the parking agreement (authorised by the Council in October 2025 at point 3137) to park subcontractors' vehicles on the playing field hard-standing away from the site.

3203 Defibrillators. The Clerk reported no issues revealed by monthly checks of the two machines. The Clerk also reported that the lock on the BSP cabinet was broken, and was instructed to ascertain a quote for repair.

3204 Belchamp Otten village sign. No report was tabled by Hannah Rumsey at this time, who has kindly offered to continue work on the project.

3205 Flooding. Borley Rd, Bevingdon: some improvement to the situation (despite a very wet Jan & Feb) was noted by a local resident. Cllr Schwier has informed us that this longstanding flooding site has been put into the 2026/27 Surface Water Alleviation Scheme: this may start in the summer and the road will be closed for several days while work is underway.

3206 Street cleaning agreement & fly tipping. The 2026/27 agreement has been received from Braintree D C, indicating a small increase in payment to £1,461. Under the Chairman's authority the Clerk signed the agreement on behalf of the Council. *A resolution to approve the agreement was proposed by Cllr Curran, seconded by Cllr Money, and passed unanimously.*

3207 Correspondence. Correspondence sent and received was circulated to Councillors on 24/3/26.

3208 Planning – New Applications / Decisions:

Shearing Place, BSP. 25/02847/FUL. Proposed agricultural building for straw storage. *Granted 11/2/26.*

Butlers Farm, Bakers Rd, BSP. 26/00495/COUPA. COU agricultural building to 3 residences. *Consultation by 26/3/26. Determination deadline 29/4/26.*

Eastfields, Bakers Rd, BSP. 26/00669/PLD. Cert of lawfulness for conversion of garage to habitable room. *Information only.*

Little Barns, Shearing Place, BSP. 26/00640/FUL. Change of use agricultural to B8 storage. *Consultation 14/4/26. Determination 14/5/26.*

Hole Farm, Knowl Green. 26/00481/VAR.

(Cllr Middleditch left the meeting for the discussion).

Variation of condition 5 (Landscaping) and condition 8 (Noise -Biomass Plant) of approved application 18/02239/FUL granted 30/04/19 for: Development of three free-range poultry units, together with associated access, ranging area, landscaping and biomass generator. Variation will allow: the condition wording to align with the approved technical assessments and the agreed landscaping implementation.

Under the Chairman's authority, the Clerk had requested the deadline for comments to be extended to 22/4/26 (day after the next P C meeting). This has not been granted. Determination deadline 2/6/26.

Cllr Carter requested the Clerk, in her absence, read out a prepared statement opposing the application. This statement is attached to the minutes.

The planning application was discussed by the Council, assisted by interested members of the public.

A resolution opposing the planning application on the ground of excessive noise was proposed by Cllr Curran, seconded by Cllr Money, and passed unanimously. The Clerk was instructed to lodge the objection with Braintree D C.

(Cllr Middleditch rejoined the meeting).

- **Damage by Solar Farm lorries.** Considerable damage to roads, and traffic inconvenience to residents, was caused in Jan and Feb by lorries delivering materials to the Solar Farm in Bakers Rd. The planning aspects were summarised by the Clerk and are set out in a note attached to the minutes. The Clerk was instructed to follow up matters with Cllr Parker and Mr Mentessi of Braintree DC Planning Enforcement, and obtain and distribute the contractor’s newsletter to residents.

3209 PUBLIC DISCUSSION TIME (5 minutes). No points were raised.

3210 Any urgent matters and proposals for future agenda items. The Chairman advised the Council that trees belonging to the Community House will be pruned and logs will be left on the Green for the use of residents.

3211 2026 Annual Parish Assemblies. These will be held as follows: **Belchamp Otten** - Monday 13/4/26 - Red Lion, Fowes Lane, 7:30 pm; **BSP** - Tuesday 14/4/26 - Community House 7:30 pm.

3212 The next Council meeting will be held on Tuesday 21 April 2026 at 7:30pm in the Community House, Gages Rd, Belchamp St Paul.

The meeting closed at8:35 pm.....

Signed

Chairman

21 April 2026