

Belchamp St Paul and Belchamp Otten Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 21 April 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, David Middleditch, and Tony Money.

In attendance: John Douglass (Clerk).

1 member of the public attended.

3213 Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest. Apologies were received from Cllr Jay Stevens, Cllr Iona Parker (Braintree D C), and Cllr Peter Schwier (Essex C C).

A declaration of interest in item 3227 – Planning – Hole Farm – was made by Cllrs Claire Middleditch and David Middleditch.

3214 PUBLIC DISCUSSION TIME (5 minutes). A resident pointed out that National Lottery grants were not limited to one per village, and a grant may be available for improvements to the playing field and pavilion.

3215 Approval of the Minutes of the meeting held on 31 March 2026. The draft Minutes were discussed with particular reference to point 3208 – Planning – Hole Farm. *A resolution to approve the minutes was proposed by Cllr Curran, seconded by Cllr Bowden, and passed by a majority of four to zero with two abstentions.*

3216 Matters arising from the March PC meeting (not covered separately on the agenda). No matters were tabled.

3217 Essex County Council matters. Emails received from Cllr Schwier (Essex C C) had been circulated to Councillors on 15/4/26.

3218 Braintree District Council matters. No matters were tabled.

3219 Essex Community Foundation donation. The Clerk pointed out that the donation was referred to in the paragraph “Giving Back to the Community” in BSR’s newsletter published on 17/4/26.

3220 Finance – Approval of receipts and payments. The only payment made since the last meeting was a direct debit to EON for pavilion electricity in the amount of £41.07.

It was noted that the position of Responsible Financial Officer has been vacant since the resignation of former Cllr Chaplin on 1/4/26. Cllr Curran offered to act as temporary RFO until a replacement is appointed.

- **2025/26 accounts & audit.** The Clerk pointed out that in order to meet the external auditor's timetable of AGAR self-certification by 1/7/26, the accounts for the year ended 31/3/26, the AGAR, and the other financial reporting documents required would need approval at the next P C meeting on 19/5/26. No timetable or instructions regarding the 5% sample Intermediate Review have yet been received from PKF Littlejohn, the external auditors.

3221 Local Design Code Working Group – update. The Clerk read out Hannah Rumsey's update, which mentioned that photos and drone shots, and painting a cover image, are under way.

3222 Speedwatch & traffic. The Clerk stated that Essex C C has scheduled non-urgent repairs to the road surfaces at Bakers Cut (next to Cole Green), and Bakers Road near the Bradley Hill turning.

An invoice for £114.28 has been issued to Silversmith Homes Ltd in respect of van parking on the playing field hardstanding.

No Speedwatch sessions have been held.

3223 Defibrillators. Monthly checks on the two machines were undertaken. The broken lock on the BSP cabinet had been examined by local electrician Sam Perella who replaced the batteries FOC. The Clerk was instructed to contact a local locksmith to effect necessary repairs.

3224 Belchamp Otten village sign. No further developments were tabled.

3225 Flooding. No new issues have been reported (albeit the weather has been very dry).

3226 Correspondence. Correspondence had been circulated to Councillors on 15/4/26.

3227 Planning – New Applications / Decisions:

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

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

Stettles Farm, The Street, Belchamp Otten. 26/00821/AGR. Prior notification of erection of grain shed.
Determination 10/5/26.

- **Ongoing:**

Hole Farm, Knowl Green. 26/00481/VAR. Variation of condition 5 (Landscaping) and condition 8 (Noise -Biomass Plant) of approved application 18/02239/FUL granted 30/04/19. *Cllrs Claire Middleditch and David Middleditch vacated the room for this matter.* Variation will allow: the condition wording to align with the approved technical assessments and the agreed landscaping implementation.

The Parish Council objected to the proposal on 7/4/26 (resolution 3208 of 31/3/26 Minutes). Response by applicant 8/4/26 filed on the Braintree D C planning portal: “. .this application represents a technical correction to a defective planning condition. . .it does not propose any increase in operational activity or noise levels. . .” Determination deadline 2/6/26. Cllrs Claire Middleditch and David Middleditch returned to the meeting.

Solar Farm, Bakers Rd, BSP, 25/00861/DAC.

Planning enforcement case now closed by Braintree D C Enforcement Officer Oliver Mentessi on the grounds remedial steps have been taken by the contractor and there is an absence of ongoing planning breaches.

A newsletter prepared by BSR informing residents of construction and delivery matters was circulated to Councillors and posted to the website on 17/4/26.

3228 PUBLIC DISCUSSION TIME (5 minutes). No points were tabled.

3229 Any urgent matters and proposals for future agenda items:

- Playing field equipment: the Chairman requested inspection and repair where necessary by the Playing Field Management Committee, as a resident had identified possible safety concerns.
- The Clerk asked Councillors to note the minutes of the Belchamp Otten and Belchamp St Paul Annual Parish Assemblies, which had been circulated to Councillors on 15/4/26.

3230 The Annual Meeting will be held on Tuesday 19 May 2026 at 7:30pm in the Community House, Gages Rd, Belchamp St Paul.

The meeting closed at8:15 pm.....

Signed
(Chairman)

19 May 2026