

Belchamp St Paul and Belchamp Otten Parish Council

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 19 May 2026 commencing at 7.30pm, in The Community House, Gages Road, Belchamp St Paul.

Present: Councillors David McKee (Chairman), Dominic Curran, David Middleditch, Tony Money, and Jay Stevens.

In Attendance: John Douglass (Clerk). 3 members of the public were in attendance.

3231 Election of Chairman and signing of Declaration of Acceptance of Office. David McKee indicated his willingness to stand as Chairman for the forthcoming year. *A resolution approving David McKee as Chairman was proposed by Cllr Middleditch, seconded by Cllr Curran, and passed unanimously.*

3232 Election of Vice Chairman. Cllr Rob Bowden has offered, in writing, to stand as Vice-Chairman for the forthcoming year. *A resolution approving Cllr Bowden as Vice-Chairman was proposed by Cllr Curran, seconded by Cllr Middleditch, and passed unanimously.*

3233 Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest. Apologies were tabled from Cllrs Bowden and Claire Middleditch. An apology was also tabled from Cllr Parker (Braintree D C).

3234 PUBLIC DISCUSSION TIME (5 minutes). No matters were raised.

3235 Approval of the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 April 2026. *A resolution approving the minutes was proposed by Cllr Middleditch, seconded by Cllr Stevens, and passed unanimously.*

3236 Matters arising from the April PC meeting (not covered separately on the Agenda). State of the children's play equipment on the playing field: further inspection by councillors had not identified any urgent repairs. The Clerk was instructed to obtain a copy of the recent Wicksteed report.

3237 Annual Administrative Matters:**Appointment/approval of Council Officers and Representatives including Playing Field Working Group.**

Belchamp St Paul Community House Trust. It was noted that Cllr McKee has resigned as Chairman, and Cllr Curran has been appointed Acting Chairman.

Footpath Warden & Emergency Officer. Peter Hesketh was re-appointed.

Playing Field Working Group. The Group consists of Holly Chaplin, Cllrs Curran, Claire Middleditch and Stevens, Lucy Hood, Jo & Rob Jones, and two others.

Adoption of Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, and Councillors Code of Conduct.

The Clerk has reviewed the documents and has not identified any matters requiring amendment.

Appointment of Responsible Financial Officer and Internal Auditor. Cllr Curran, having expressed his willingness to act, has been appointed temporary RFO. Jon Yates has agreed to continue as Internal Auditor.

Confirmation of Bank Signatories. The signatories are: Cllrs McKee, Curran, and Money.

A resolution approving these appointments was proposed by Cllr Middleditch, seconded by Cllr Stevens, and passed unanimously.

3238 Essex County Council matters. Emails were circulated to Councillors on 12/5/26. It was noted that Peter Schwier was defeated in the recent council elections. The new Councillor for the Hedingham Division is Nathan Robbins of the Reform Party. The Clerk was instructed to write a letter of thanks to Peter Schwier for his sterling service over the past five years.

3239 Braintree District Council matters. The report from Cllr Parker was circulated to Councillors on 19/5/26. Main points covered were: dog controls, new waste collection system, and the Renters Rights Bill.

3240 Finance – Approval of receipts and payments. The bank statement had been circulated to Councillors on 18/5/26, and is attached to these minutes. *A resolution approving the document was proposed by Cllr Curran, seconded by Cllr Middleditch, and passed unanimously.*

- **Asset register 31/3/26.** Dealt with at minute 3241 - audit 2025/26.

-**Insurance arrangement 2026/27 – renewal 1/6/26.** Clear Councils Insurance have issued a renewal notice keeping the terms similar to last year and index-linking the buildings cover. The renewal premium will rise to £956 from £943 last year. *A resolution approving renewal of the insurance was proposed by Cllr Middleditch, seconded by Cllr Stevens, and passed unanimously.*

3241 Audit 2025/26:

- **Approve 2025/26 PC Accounts.** The accounts, which have been signed off by the Internal Auditor, were circulated to Councillors on 18/5/26.
- **Consider, approve and sign the Annual Governance and Accountability Return.** The AGAR, together with the Asset Register at May 2026 (not 31/3/26), the explanation of variances, and the bank reconciliation (PKF Littlejohn format) were circulated to Councillors on 18/5/26.

A resolution approving the 2025/26 accounts, the AGAR, the Asset Register, the explanation of variances, and the bank reconciliation (PKF Littlejohn format) was proposed by Cllr Stevens, seconded by Cllr Curran, and passed unanimously. The Clerk was instructed to file the documentation with PKF Littlejohn, and publish it on the website and notice boards as required.

The Chairman expressed his thanks to Cllr Money for the sterling work undertaken in this matter.

3242 Verge cutting 2026/27. A purchase order for verge cutting has been received from Essex C C, and an invoice raised and sent to them for £2,313.93, a small increase over the previous year. The Clerk has requested five local farmers undertake the work. *A resolution approving these actions was proposed by Cllr Curran, seconded by Cllr Stevens, and passed unanimously.*

3243 Local Design Code – update. Braintree D C are currently reviewing the Code.

3244 Speedwatch & traffic. The Clerk stated that road resurfacing has been completed at Sturmer and Foxearth, which were suffering severe pothole damage. Cllr Curran has resigned as the Speedwatch co-ordinator. The Chairman expressed his thanks to Cllr Curran for the sterling work undertaken over recent years.

3245 Defibrillators. Monthly checks have been undertaken on the machines. Regarding the broken BSP cabinet lock, the Clerk has requested a repair estimate from DB Locksmiths of Pentlow.

3246 Belchamp Otten village sign update. No further information is available at this time.

3247 Correspondence. Correspondence was circulated to Councillors on 12/5/26.

3248 Clerk's Contract (expired 31/3/26). A proposal to renew the contract on previous terms, but with an increase in fees of 3.8% (reflecting the increase in the statutory minimum wage) to £3,140 p.a, to include internet expenses which were previously billed separately, was tabled. *A resolution approving a new contract on these terms for 2026/27 was proposed by Cllr Curran, seconded by Cllr Middleditch, and passed unanimously.* The Chairman thanked the Clerk for his work over the past year.

3249 Planning – New Applications / Decisions:

Butlers Farm, Bakers Rd, BSP. 26/00495/COUPA. COU agricultural building to 3 residences. *Planning permission now required.*

Little Barns, Shearing Place, BSP. 26/00640/FUL. Change of use agricultural to B8 storage. *Permission granted 13/5/26.*

Stettles Farm, The Street, Belchamp Otten. 26/00821/AGR. Prior notification erection of grain shed. Site notice now required owing to comment by Place Services. *Determination 1/6/26.*

-Ongoing:

Solar Park, Bakers Rd, BSP. 25/00861/DAC. An update on deliveries and other matters has been received from the contractor. This will be published on the website.

3250 PUBLIC DISCUSSION TIME (5 minutes). No matters were raised.

3251 Any urgent matters and proposals for future agenda items.

-Proposed telegraph pole on Cole Green. Openreach are proposing to erect a light pole on the Green opposite Baytree House. This is in connection with building a full fibre broadband network to Clare. The Clerk was instructed to write to Openreach expressing parishioners’ concerns regarding the visual impact of the proposal.

-Sudbury Office Supplies Account. The Clerk has requested authority for the P C to open a credit account with a local stationer to ensure compliance with the regulations covering the reclaim of VAT. *A resolution approving this transaction was proposed by Cllr Curran, seconded by Cllr Stevens, and passed unanimously.*

3252 The next Council meeting will be held on Tuesday 7 July 2026 at 7:30pm in The Community House, Gages Road, Belchamp St Paul.

The meeting closed at8:22 pm.....

Signed

Chairman

7 July 2026