

Belchamp St Paul and Belchamp Otten Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 8 September 2026 commencing at 7.30pm, in The Community House, Gages Road, Belchamp St Paul.

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

In Attendance: John Douglass (Clerk) and Nathan Robins (Essex County Council). 1 member of the public attended.

3271 Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest. Apologies were received from Cllr Rob Bowden and Iona Parker (Braintree District Council).

3272 PUBLIC DISCUSSION TIME (5 minutes). No points were raised.

3273 Approval of the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2026. The Minutes were considered. *A resolution approving the minutes was proposed by Cllr Curran, seconded by Cllr David Middleditch, and passed unanimously.*

3274 Matters arising from the July PC meeting (not covered separately on the agenda). No points were raised.

3275 Essex County Council matters. Cllr Robins gave a verbal report: 1. The emergency pothole repair programme shows promising results. Braintree D C is 2nd in the Essex league table for repairs completed. 2. Enforcement letters are being sent out in respect of overgrown hedges which are impeding traffic. 3. A drain clearance programme has commenced, but there is a lack of staff and machinery for the work. 4. A review of HGV near schools strategy is being undertaken. 5. Operation Vanguard has been set up providing private security staff to assist the police in Braintree, Chelmsford, and Colchester on a 3 month trial basis. There are 2 personnel for each town. They will carry handcuffs and bodycams and will have powers of citizens' arrest. It is hoped they will prove deterrence to pickpocketing, shoplifting, and minor crime. 6. A foster care recruitment campaign is underway on the ground that fostering is preferable to children's homes for youngsters in difficult situations. 7. Closure of Bakers Rd for gully work until 14/9/26: Cllr Robins has requested further details from Highways' officers. It was noted that road closure signage is sometimes unreliable, but authorities other than Essex C

C (Eg Anglian Water) have the power to close roads. 8. The Essex Council re-organisation has been abandoned by the Government. District elections will take place next year 2027.

3276 Braintree District Council matters. The report from Cllr Parker is attached to these minutes.

3277 Finance – Approval of receipts and payments. The bank statement was circulated to Councillors on 1/9/26 and is attached to this report. *A resolution approving the document was proposed by Cllr David Middleditch, seconded by Cllr Claire Middleditch, and passed unanimously.*

3278 Speedwatch & traffic. 2 Speedwatch sessions have been held since the last meeting. 5 reports have been issued where motorists exceeded 35 mph. Borley Rd was closed for 5 days in August for gulley work; it is anticipated this will help alleviate flooding at this point.

3279 Defibrillators. Monthly checks of the machines have been undertaken. The Clerk has, so far, been unsuccessful in obtaining quotations from locksmiths for repairing the broken cabinet lock on the BSP defib.

3280 Correspondence. Correspondence was circulated to Councillors on 1/9/26.

3281 Review of General Data Protection Regulations. A report prepared by the Clerk was considered by Councillors. Recommendations can be summarised as follows:

1. References to councillors on the website and notice boards should show only their names and email addresses; other contact information should be deleted. *A resolution approving this action was proposed by Cllr David Middleditch, seconded by Cllr Claire Middleditch, and passed unanimously.*
2. P C hosting for Councillors' email correspondence should be set up to separate Councillors' PC and personal emails. The Clerk was instructed to investigate this procedure and, if necessary, to schedule an amount in the 2027/28 budget in respect of costs. *A resolution approving this action was proposed by Cllr Stevens, seconded by Cllr Claire Middleditch, and passed unanimously.*
3. Data backup for the P C laptop computer should be migrated from flash drives to a free cloud-based system such as Google Drive. *A resolution approving this action was proposed by Cllr David Middleditch, seconded by Cllr Curran, and passed unanimously.*
4. Archive filing cabinets consisting of 2 X 2 drawer cabinets are being held at former Councillor Ruth Carter's home. The cabinet contents should be reviewed with a view to destruction of those documents not needed, using a commercial document shredding service if necessary. Cllr Claire Middleditch offered to host one cabinet in her property. *A resolution approving this action was proposed by Cllr Stevens, seconded by Cllr Curran, and passed unanimously.*

3282 Wicksteed inspection playground equipment. The Clerk informed Councillors that an inspection in spring 2027 would cost £150 + VAT. *A resolution approving this action was proposed by Cllr David Middleditch, seconded by Cllr Stevens, and passed unanimously.*

3283 Digital AGAR portal for 2027 accounts. The Clerk reported that the Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments (organisation responsible for the external auditors) are introducing filing of the Annual Governance & Accountability Returns via a digital portal in place of the current email system. The portal should be more efficient and more secure. Filing via the portal will be voluntary for the 2027 filing, and mandatory for 2029 onwards. An incentive scheme has been introduced to encourage early adoption. *A resolution approving registration for the portal was proposed by Cllr Curran, seconded by Cllr Claire Middleditch, and passed unanimously.*

3284 Disposal of old computer. The Clerk reported that the old HP computer inherited from Diane Smith was now defunct and should be scrapped after deleting all data. The Clerk would be able to undertake this work at no cost. *A resolution approving this action was proposed by Cllr Stevens, seconded by Cllr David Middleditch, and passed unanimously.*

3285 Planning – New Applications / Decisions.

Lymburners, Cole Green, BSP. 26/01898/HH. Demolition of garage & shed & erection of replacement garage. *Comments by 17/9/26. Determination deadline 13/10/26*

Pannells, Cole Green, BSP. 26/01167/HH & 26/01168/LBC. Application for single storey rear extension. *Refused 23/7/26.*

Little Barn, Shearing Place Rd, BSP. 26/01299/DAC. Discharge of landscaping condition. *Holding objection by Location Services.*

Endway, The Street, B Otten. 26/01340 & 1/HH. Single story extension & solar panels. *Granted 10/8/26.*

Community House, BSP. 26/01567/TPOCON. Works to trees in a conservation area. *No objections 14/8/26.*

Old Rectory, The Street, Belchamp Otten. 26/01583/TPO & 26/01586/DD. Works to trees. *No objections 22/8/26.*

Lion Cottage, Shearing Place Rd, BSP. 26/01651/HH. Erection of cart lodge with office accommodation. *Determination deadline 18/9/26.*

Glebe Cottage, Cole Green, BSP. 26/01715/VAR. Variation of conditions. *Determination deadline 18/9/26.*

ONGOING

Hole Farm, Knowl Green. 26/00481/VAR. Variation of condition 5 (Landscaping) and condition 8. *Determination deadline 2/6/26. Still pending consideration 7/9/26.*

Solar Park, Bakers Rd, BSP, 25/00861/DAC. Transformer delivery 11/8/26. Hedges trimmed by contractor at request of Clerk.

3286 PUBLIC DISCUSSION TIME (5 minutes). A member of the public remarked that many of the drains in the village are blocked by straw and general debris in view of the recent lack of rain. Cllr Robins had already mentioned attention to this matter by Essex C C (3275/3 above). The Clerk stated that if a What3Words location plus a photo if appropriate could be provided he would follow up specific clearance site requests with Essex C C.

3287 Any urgent matters and proposals for future agenda items. 1. Cllr Curran stated that Community House users had recently parked on the village Green outside the House. He suggested that new No Parking notices should be placed at this end of the Green. Councillors agreed this work should be actioned at an estimated cost of £100 for 2 notices plus the cost of the posts. 2. Cllr Stevens pointed out that an overgrown willow tree at the rear of 4 Bakers Rd was overhanging the playing field and both neighbours' gardens. One neighbour has already written to Eastlight Housing Association requesting remedial work. Cllr Stevens has erected screening to keep children away from the overhanging branches which appear to be dead. The Clerk was instructed to follow up this issue with Eastlight.

3288 The next Council meeting will be held on Tuesday 20 October 2026 at 7:30pm in The Community House, Gages Road, Belchamp St Paul.

The meeting closed at8:30 pm.....

Signed
(Chairman)

20 October 2026