

Belchamp St Paul and Belchamp Otten Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 20 October 2026 commencing at 7.30pm, in The Community House, Gages Road, Belchamp St Paul.

Present: Councillors David McKee (chairman), Rob Bowden (vice chairman), Dominic Curran, Claire Middleditch, David Middleditch, and Tony Money.

In Attendance: John Douglass (Clerk) and Cllr Iona Parker (Braintree District Council). 1 member of the public attended.

3289 Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest. Apologies were received from Cllr Jay Stevens and Cllr Nathan Robins (Essex County Council).

3290 PUBLIC DISCUSSION TIME (5 minutes). The matter of a blocked drain in Otten Road was mentioned from the floor.

3291 Approval of the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2026. The minutes were considered. *A resolution approving the minutes was proposed by Cllr David Middleditch, seconded by Cllr Curran, and passed unanimously.*

3292 Matters arising from the September PC meeting (not covered separately on the agenda). The Clerk stated that the dangerous tree at the rear of 4 Bakers Road had been lopped by the housing association.

3293 Proposed new councillor. The summary C V of Mr Ian Allgood of Knowl Green was considered by Councillors. The Clerk was instructed to invite Mr Allgood to the next meeting on 1/12/26 with a view to appointing him a Parish Councillor at that meeting.

3294 Essex County Council matters. No matters were considered.

3295 Braintree District Council matters. Cllr Parker gave a summary of developments including: the proposed local government reorganisation has been paused by the government; Braintree D C district elections are scheduled for May 2027; the local design codes are being consolidated ready to submit to government inspectors; new rules for planning enforcement are to be introduced with a view to promoting development; A12 improvements are being considered in the light of the scrapping of the dualling proposal; there remains £750 in the Councillor's Community Grant Scheme Fund.

3296 Finance – Approval of receipts and payments. The receipts and payments report prepared by the acting RFO (Cllr Curran) had been circulated to Councillors on 15/10/26. See attached report. *A resolution approving the report was proposed by Cllr Money, seconded by Cllr David Middleditch, and passed unanimously.*

The Clerk reported that unpaid rent amounting to £214 was due from Silversmith Homes Ltd under their contract for parking on the playing field. Reminders had elicited no response.

-2027/28 budget. Copies of the draft 2027/28 budget, prepared by Cllrs Curran and Money, were discussed by Councillors, who requested finalisation of the figures in time for the next meeting on 1/12/26, at which a resolution would be tabled.

3297 Speedwatch, traffic and roads. No Speedwatch sessions had been held.

3298 Defibrillators. The usual monthly checks on the defibrillators have been undertaken. The Clerk reported that he had been unable to find a locksmith prepared to repair the broken digital lock on the BSP cabinet outside the Community House. He noted that recently a motor vehicle had been taken from outside the Community House. In these circumstances he recommended a new cabinet be purchased in the interests of security, and to comply with the 999 emergency ambulance system. The cost of a new cabinet was £506 + VAT, with an estimate of £100 for fitting. The Clerk was instructed to seek funding for this project, initially from Cllr Parker's Community Grant Scheme Fund.

3299 Correspondence. Correspondence was circulated to Councillors on 13/10/26.

3300 2027 meeting dates. The schedule of proposed 2027 meetings had been circulated to Councillors on 13/10/26. *A resolution approving the schedule was proposed by Cllr Curran, seconded by Cllr David Middleditch, and passed unanimously.*

3301 Planning – New Applications / Decisions. See attached schedule.

3302 PUBLIC DISCUSSION TIME (5 minutes). No matters were raised.

3303 Any urgent matters and proposals for future agenda items. (1) Replacement village sign for Belchamp Otten. Hannah Rumsey's design had been circulated to Councillors and met with approval. Regarding funding, an offer to assist has been made by a new resident of Belchamp Otten; other possible sources included a s106 contribution from the developer of Michael's Yard, and a contribution by the Community Benefit Fund following completion of the Bakers Road Solar Park. The Clerk was instructed to request completion of the design by Hannah together with obtaining a firm estimate of its cost. A sincere vote of thanks was tabled by the Chairman for Hannah's sterling work on this project.

(2) Local Design Code. This document, drawn up by Hannah Rumsey and Diane Smith, gives guidelines for future development in the villages, and is taken into account by Braintree D C in their planning decisions. The latest draft had been circulated to Councillors and met with their approval. Councillors requested Hannah and Diane complete the Code and table it for resolution at the next meeting, after which it could be submitted to Braintree D C as the definitive document. A sincere vote of thanks was tabled by the Chairman for Hannah's and Diane's sterling work on this project.

(3) Status of Community House. Cllr Money reported that the legal status of the Community House is to be changed from a charity to a charitable incorporated organisation in the interests of efficient management. Also, planning permission will be sought to increase the car parking spaces for the Community House to ease congestion and a shortage of parking. The application should be made by the Parish Council itself.

(4) No parking on Green signs. In order to address the issue of vehicles parking on the Green, Cllr Curran displayed suitable signage and was asked to source three signs for use. The posts would be aluminium profile which could be easily affixed and pulled out of the ground for the purposes of grass cutting.

3304 The next Council meeting will be held on Tuesday 1 December 2026 at 7:30pm in The Community House, Gages Road, Belchamp St Paul.

The meeting closed at 8:30 pm.....

Signed
(Chairman)

1 December 2026