

Belchamp St Paul and Belchamp Otten Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 14 October 2025 commencing at 7.30pm in The Community House, Gages Road, Belchamp St Paul.

Present: Councillors David McKee (chairman), Ruth Carter, Holly Chaplin, Dominic Curran, David Middleditch, Tony Money, Hannah Rumsey.

In Attendance: John Douglass (clerk).

3130 Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest. Apologies were received from councillors Sarah Mardon, Iona Parker (Braintree D C) and Peter Schwier (Essex CC).

3131 PUBLIC DISCUSSION TIME (5 minutes). Two members of the public were present. No matters were raised.

3132 Approval of the Minutes of the meeting held on 2 September 2025. *A resolution to approve the minutes was proposed by Cllr Middleditch, seconded by Cllr Curran, and passed unanimously.*

3133 Matters arising from the September PC meeting (not covered separately on the agenda). The clerk informed the meeting that the residential qualification for new councillors was three miles from the parish boundary.

3134 Essex County Council matters. Emails from Cllr Schwier had been circulated to councillors on 7/10/25.

3135 Braintree District Council matters. Cllr Parker's report has been posted to the website.

3136 Essex Community Foundation donation. Reference was made to the email of Martha Kool on behalf of British Solar Renewables circulated to councillors on 6/10/25. This states that the Community Benefit Fund of £50,000 with Essex Community Foundation will be in place upon energisation of the solar park, expected in Oct 2026. This has been ringfenced for the parishes of Belchamp St Paul, Belchamp Otten, Ovington, Ashen, Tilbury Juxta Clare, Little Yeldham, and Clare. It goes on to say that an additional £50,000 will be made available for the BSP Community House to support an energy saving project. The donations have revealed a potential conflict of interest whereby Cllr McKee, as chairman of the Parish Council, is ex-officio chairman of the Community House Trustees. The situation will be addressed by a change in the constitution of the Community House Trust, together with closer liaison in the future between the Community House Trustees and the Parish Council.

3137 Finance – Approval of receipts and payments. The report will be available shortly and will be posted to the website.

-Rental agreement with Ground Zero Developments Ltd. The agreement to rent parking spaces to Ground Zero Developments, the Lamberts Farm development builders, had been circulated to councillors on 8/10/25. The parking area concerned is the hard standing at the Gages Rd playing field, and the rental income is £25 per week until completion of the works at Lamberts Farm. *A resolution to approve the agreement was proposed by Cllr Curran, seconded by Cllr Chaplin, and passed unanimously.* The clerk was instructed to sign two copies on behalf of the P C, obtain GZD's signature, and retain one signed copy for the file.

-2026/27 Budget. The draft budget prepared by Cllr Money was discussed, and it was noted that a deficit of £499 was forecast based on a precept of £6,000 – an increase of 20% on the current precept. The detailed figures were subsequently circulated to councillors.

3138 Vacant BSP Councillor seats – meet 2 candidates. The two candidates were Jay Stevens and Claire Middleditch. A third candidate, Lucy Hood, had requested consideration shortly before the meeting. The CVs of the candidates had been circulated to councillors before the meeting. Each candidate gave a short presentation setting out the reasons they wished to be parish councillors. The three candidates left the room. *A resolution to invite the candidates to fill the three vacant BSP seats was proposed by Cllr Carter, seconded by Cllr Rumsey, and passed unanimously.* The clerk was instructed to complete the formalities and notify Braintree D C accordingly.

3139 PFMC terms of reference. A revised constitution and status of the playing field management committee was outlined by Cllr Chaplin for councillors' information.

3140 Local Development Code Working Group – update. Cllr Rumsey had no matters to report.

3141 Speedwatch & traffic – parking on Cole Green. Cllr Curran reported that three Speedwatch sessions had been held, and twelve vehicles reported for speeding. The clerk reported that he had advised Essex C C concerning the broken road edges in Hickford Hill; Essex issued a reference number but classified the situation as "not urgent". He had also reported the poor road surface in Bakers Cut next to Cole Green; no response has yet been received. The clerk was instructed to check the top of Bakers Rd near Ovington for a broken road surface and report to Essex if appropriate.

3142 Defibrillators. New pads have been fitted to the BSP machine at a cost of £67 + VAT. They expire on 30/11/27.

3143 Belchamp Otten village sign. Cllr Rumsey stated that work continues on this project.

3144 Repair of Hickford Hill notice board. The clerk reported that he had received an email quote from Middleton Joinery of £975 + VAT. Regarding funding, the clerk recommended an application to the Essex Communities Initiative Fund for a micro-grant. *A resolution instructing the clerk to proceed on this basis and to apply for a micro-grant was proposed by Cllr Curran, seconded by Cllr Middleditch, and passed unanimously.*

3145 Flooding. 1. Borley Rd Bevingdon: Essex C C officers visited the site on 18/8/25 and suspect a blocked culvert under the road. They have proposed a Surface Water Alleviation Scheme for the site. 2. The Street, Belchamp Otten: Inspectors will visit and undertake an assessment. A letter was sent to a local farmer requesting clearance of the ditch. 3. Coles Barn, Belchamp Otten: Inspectors will visit and undertake an assessment. 4. Cole Green drain opposite Plough Cottage, Gages Rd: reported to Anglian Water who state they have cleared the blockage.

3146 Correspondence. Correspondence had been circulated to councillors on 7/10/25.

3147 2026 Meeting Dates. The schedule of proposed dates was reviewed, and it was noted that the Community House would be closed in Jan 2026 for building work. Cllr Chaplin suggested BSP church as an alternative venue for the Jan meeting which she, as church warden, could arrange. *Approval of the meeting dates was proposed by Cllr Rumsy, seconded by Cllr Carter, and passed unanimously.*

3148 Planning – New Applications / Decisions.

Dollery, Bakers Rd, BSP. 25/01543/HH. Remove existing garage, erection of detached 2 storey garage with annexe. *Granted 3/9/25.*

Lamberts Farm/Michaels Yard, BSP. 25/01610/DAC. Discharge of conditions materials windows & doors. *Granted 10/9/25.*

Coles Farm B Otten. 25/00016/TPOCON. Work to trees. *No objection.*

1 Otten Rd, B Otten . 25/00815/TPOCON. Request to fell crab apple tree. *Deemed permitted.*

Cherry Tree P H, Knowle Green BSP. 25/01565/FUL. Change of use to 1 dwelling house. Parish Council + neighbour objections on ground of public house being turned into dwelling. *Granted 13/10/25.*

Browns Barn, Church St, BSP. 25/02041/DAC. Discharge of conditions of doors and windows. *Determination 3/11/25.*

3149 PUBLIC DISCUSSION TIME (5 minutes). No matters were raised.

3150 Any urgent matters and proposals for future agenda items. 1. The clerk reported that an advert would be inserted into the Parish magazine for a new tree warden. 2. A preliminary discussion took place regarding the Christmas tree on Cole Green Christmas 2025. It was hoped sponsorship would be forthcoming.

3151 The next Council meeting will be held on Tuesday 25 November 2025 at 7:30pm in The Community House, Gages Road, Belchamp St Paul.

The meeting closed at8:45 pm.....

Signed (Chairman)

25 November 2025