

BELCHAMP WALTER PARISH COUNCIL

The Parish Council meeting was held on 1st March 2023 at 7:30 at the village hall.

Present:

Cllr J Walker (Chair), Cllr A Hogsbjerg, Cllr M Winter Cllr P. Scott, Dist Cllr I Parker, County Cllr P. Schwier, Ms J Munro (Parish Clerk)

Apologies

Cllr C Krelle, Cllr E Poels, Cllr R Teverson,

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd November 2022 were approved and signed by the chair as a correct record.

2. Declaration of interest in agenda items

None

3. Reports

County Cllr P Schwier reported on developments at Essex County Council including:

- The Essex County Council has been able to limit the increase in its portion of Council Tax to 3.5%
- The works on the bridge at Great Yeldham have experienced some delays due to bad weather conditions. It is anticipated the works will be finished by Summer
- There is a lot of information on cost of living support on the Essex County Council website
- The consultation on the Finchingfield Bridge has now closed
- Essex Highways has issued a toolkit outlining its role and responsibility. The toolkit includes instructions on how residents should report potholes. An extra £9 million will be spent on potholes and some footpaths will also be repaired.
- The cheaper bus travel for Essex residents has been extended to the end of June.
- Essex highways is calling on landowners with ditches and low hanging trees near roads to make sure these are cleared and cut back by spring.

In response to questions, County Cllr P Schwier noted that if several people are concerned about a particular pothole they could each report it as this would demonstrate the level of concern to Highways

It was noted the **drains** on the corner approaching Eyston Farm are blocked resulting in frequent flooding. The flooding is particularly dangerous as it occurs on a blind bend with cars going on the wrong side of the road to avoid the water. County Cllr P Schwier said he would pass it on to Highways for cleaning if he were emailed the exact location.

Action Ms J Munro

District Cllr I Parker reported on developments at Braintree District Council including:

- BDC had a £2 million short fall in its budget. It was able to find £1 million in cost savings including:
 - The recycling calendar will no longer be issued in hard copy
 - There will be a charge for green bin collection (opt in)
 - Possibly a future reduction in the street cleansing scheme
- The Councillor grant scheme will continue.
- The savings outlined above would have given rise to a 2.5% increase but this has been offset by a one time “New Homes and Growth Dividend” of £25 that will be shown as a reduction on the 2023/2024 Council tax.
- BDC has retained £1 million for an emergency cost of living fund for groups who are really struggling. BDC is also thinking about a mobile food bank for those who find it difficult to get to Halstead or Braintree.
- Photo ID will be needed for the council elections on 4th May.

4. Parishioner Statements

None

5. Matters Arising

(a) Village Lease

Ms Munro reported that she had met with a village resident who was providing assistance with the drafting of a lease for the village hall between the Parish Council and the Village Hall Committee.

(b) Village Pond – including sign

The Council discussed the village sign. [The paint on the sign faded within a year of its installation. It is made of fibre glass and very light. The pole is on a pivot and can be lowered to remove the sign.] The Council discussed whether the sign should be professionally restored or whether it would be possible to have a local artist restore the sign. The general feeling was, given the sign is fibre glass and the paint had lasted for such a short period of time, it probably was not worth putting more money into the sign unless there was some guarantee as to how long it would last. It was agreed a sign restorer should be consulted to provide advice and a quote.

Action Ms Munro

The Council discussed the state of the pond. It was noted that it is not necessary to wait for the pond to dry up before dredging as the pond could be pumped out. It was agreed the Council would investigate how it could complete the work at a lower cost than the quotes that had been obtained.

Action Cllr Hogsbjerg, Ms Munro

(c) Litter picking

Ms Munro reported that a young resident had been contracted to pick up litter around the village.

(d) Lifebuoy

Ms Munro reported that a lifebuoy had been installed on the pond railings

6. Finance Report

(a) Ms Munro reported on the bank balances at 18/02/2023

Community Account	£8,488	
Reserves Account		£4,063
Restricted Playing Field Acct- included in above	122	

(b) Precept – Ms Munro reported that, as agreed at the previous meeting, the precept had been set at zero increase to residents. This had resulted in a slight increase in the amount that the Council would receive.

7. Other Business

The next regular meeting would be the annual meeting on Wednesday 17th May held after the annual parish meeting. In order to make the meetings as efficient as possible all councillors were asked to let the clerk know whether they wished to continue as councillors for the following year.

Action All Councillors

The Council was informed that the Village Hall Committee was obtaining quotes to repair and repaint the village hall windows. The cost would likely be over £6,000 plus extra for materials. If the Village Hall Committee decides to have the work done it might ask the Parish Council for a grant towards the work.

As the Parish Magazine will only be produced bimonthly a periodic e-newsletter is being developed. Key messages from the Parish Council meetings will be included in the BW e-news.

Action Ms Munro

8. Items for next regular meeting

Pond – including village sign

Village hall lease