

DANBURY PARISH COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 25th July 2007
at 7.45pm in the Parish Office

Present: Cllrs S Berlyn (Chairman) J Langley
 A Allen D Powell
 D Bolwell M Telling
 J Brooks J Thomson
 H Clacy A Wells
 D Hawkins J Wells
 A Keeler M Wood

In attendance: Mrs E Blyth, Assistant Clerk
 Mrs A Abbott, Assistant Clerk

Public Question Time

No members of the public were present.

The Chairman reported that PC Bill Evans was unable to attend the meeting as originally planned and had nothing further to report regarding CCTV. He had been booked to attend the September meeting.

26 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr D Whiteing. The Clerk was on annual leave.

27 Declarations of Interest

Members were reminded that they must declare any personal or prejudicial interests they know they may have in items of business on the meeting's agenda. No declarations were made.

28 Minutes

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 9th May 2007 be approved and signed as a correct record.

29 Annual Return for 2006/2007

Council was asked to approve the signing of the Annual Return by the Chairman and the Clerk following the internal audit. The documentation had been reviewed by Resources Committee and referred to Council for ratification.

RESOLVED: that the Chairman and the Clerk be authorised to sign the Annual Return and Supporting Notes for 2006/2007.

30 Appointment of External and Internal Auditors

30.1 RESOLVED: that Lubbock Fine Chartered Accountants be appointed as the Council's external auditor for the financial Year 2007/2008;

30.2 RESOLVED: that Heelis & Lodge be appointed as the Council's internal auditor for the financial year 2007/2008.

31 Appointment of Solicitor

RESOLVED: that Hill & Abbott be appointed as the Council's solicitor, if required.

32 Leases

32.1 Bowling Club Lease: Council noted that the Club would be consulting its solicitor in the next 4 to 6 weeks. A response was awaited.

32.2 Lingwood Common (VG206): A resident had written to the Council asking when the tree works would be completed. The Clerk had replied stating that the work was due to take place on Tuesday 17th July, 2007. Council noted that the work had been carried out.

33 Parish Action Plan – Review

Cllr Allen reported that he and the Clerk had reviewed the Action Plan and added comments to the Review column to reflect progress made. The revised document had been circulated. Members were reminded that the priority attached to each item reflected the views of the village, as identified in the Danbury Parish Plan 2003, and not necessarily the views of the Council. This was explained in the introduction to the published Action Plan.

Under item 3, a correction was noted to the name of the Parishes' Transportation Group. Methods of publicising the Review were discussed.

RESOLVED: that the Action Plan review, as amended above, be approved and that the changes be published on the village website with hard copies being available at the Parish Office.

34 Parish Plan 2003 – Follow-up survey

One of the recommendations in the Parish Plan was that a follow-up survey of the village be carried out within 5 years. Cllr Allen explained the work which would be involved from his experience of leading the original Parish Plan group, and indicated that he did not wish to participate in the review. In discussion it was agreed that a working group was needed to carry the review forward, and that this should again involve voluntary groups in the village as well as the Parish Council.

RESOLVED: that a working group be established to carry out the follow-up village survey and review of the Parish Plan, and that members interested in participating speak to Cllr Allen for more information as to what was involved.

35 Danbury Medical Centre – development proposals

Council noted that no further information had been received from the Centre regarding the project.

36 Publicity

Cllr Wood reported that he would shortly be calling a preliminary meeting of the Publicity Group, with a view to publishing the next edition of Danbury Times at the end of November.

37 Reports from Village Organisations

37.1 Landisdale Charity: Minutes of the meeting of Trustees held on 16th June 2007 had been circulated and were noted;

37.2 Danbury Lakes Country Park Forum: Correspondence received from Essex County Council stated that the Annual Meeting would be delayed until October this year due to the change in the portfolio holder to Councillor Peter Martin. The information was noted.

Members were concerned that ECC was proposing to sell the former warden's house into private ownership, and agreed that a letter of objection should be sent to the County Council and to Cllr Martin before the October meeting.

RESOLVED: that ECC be informed that the Parish Council wished the warden's house to remain within the Country Park and that it supported the re-use or replacement of the building as a tea-room and office.

38 Corporate Identity of Parish Council

This item had been kept on the Agenda although no further work had been completed.

39 EALC Buckingham Palace Garden Party

The Council had been requested to submit a nomination to attend a Buckingham Palace Garden Party. The nominee should be a "Chairman or Mayor" in recognition of their service to their community.

RESOLVED: that the Chairman, Cllr Berlyn, be nominated to attend.

40 CBC Tree Warden Scheme

This item had been referred by Planning Committee on 4th June 2007 and by Environment Committee on 6th June 2007. All Council members were asked to report any concerns relating to trees in the village to the Tree Warden, Mrs Pauline Bowen. Mr Richard Creak had recently resigned as a Warden. More Tree Wardens were required, and volunteers should contact the Clerk who would put them in touch with CBC. The information was noted. Cllr Wood suggested that the scheme be promoted in the Chairman's article in the next Danbury Times.

41 Donation to Open Spaces Society

RESOLVED: that, further to Minute 18.2 Parish Council held on 9th May 2007, the agreed donation to the Open Spaces Society should be recorded as a payment under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972.

42 Larger Local Councils Forum – 'Power of Well-Being' project

A written report from the Clerk, following the meeting of the Forum on 19th June 2007, described a pilot scheme planned by Essex County Council to devolve funds to Parish Councils to carry out a particular project for their community. The project would need to be approved by ECC and would be managed by the Parish Council. 10 parishes could be involved in the pilot, which was offered only to Quality councils.

In discussion of the proposal a number of concerns were raised. In particular, members were concerned at the suggestion that the Parish Councils involved in the pilot scheme might be asked to raise money through the precept if ECC funds were insufficient.

RESOLVED: that the Council did not wish to participate in the pilot scheme.

43 National Association of Local Councils: Chief Executive's Report

43.1 The annual report of NALC's Chief Executive to the National Council on 26th June 2007 had been circulated and was noted. Among items featuring in the report were references to the forthcoming Local Government Bill, Government funding for the Association, proposed changes to the Quality Council scheme, the National Training Strategy for councils, and Media Relations.

43.2 Best Value: Cllr Brooks referred to an item in the report on 'Best Value', and suggested that the Council needed an audit system to identify projects and actions not completed. This was discussed and a number of ideas were put forward. However most members felt that the staff already ensured that outstanding and on-going items were pursued and brought to committee as required.

RESOLVED: that no change be made to the current procedures, which appeared to be working well.

43.3 National Database: Council noted a reference in the report to a proposed database on which county associations had been consulted. It was not made clear what information might be included in the database.

43.4 NALC Publications: It was noted that the report referred to three NALC publications to which councils were encouraged to subscribe.

44 Drainage/Car Parking Project

Further questions had been asked of TTS, the appointed Consultants, and another meeting of the working party had been scheduled for 6th September 2007 at 10.00 am when replies should have been received. The Working Party should then be in a position to make a recommendation to full Parish Council.

45 Youth Council and Youth issues

45.1 Neighbourhood Action Panel: A report was received from a meeting of the Panel held recently at Sandon School with a number of young people from Danbury. The young people had apparently made a number of points, including the following:

- They would like a youth shelter to be installed, with part funding from the Parish Council
- Football posts to be left up for their use (*Note: This was not possible due to the law regarding insurance procedures*)
- Refurbishment of the public conveniences (owned by CBC) which were in a poor condition
- Provision of a Graffiti Wall
- An annual Danbury Fayre
- Concern about the lack of street lighting in the Belvedere area

The suggestions were noted and discussed. There was support in principle for providing facilities for teenagers in the village, and it was agreed that Facilities Committee should look into options.

RESOLVED: that the provision of facilities for young people, including a youth shelter and/or graffiti wall, be investigated further by Facilities Committee.

45.2 Youth Council: The Clerk had obtained the Youth Council Handbook from the EALC. It was noted that a Youth Council was required to have similar format and procedures as a Parish Council in terms of Standing Orders, Terms of Reference and agendas and minutes. Meetings would require a Parish Council presence, both a Councillor and a member of staff. There would therefore be cost implications and the Youth Council would require a budget. Anything the youth council requested would require adult input as under-eighteens were not permitted to enter into contracts. Members debated this subject, and it was felt that more information was required about the operation of existing youth councils. Cllr Alan Wells offered to research Youth Councils further, and this offer was gratefully accepted.

RESOLVED: that Cllr Alan Wells, in conjunction with the Clerk, investigate the operation of existing Youth Councils.

46 Police Community Support Officer (PCSO)

This item had been referred to Parish Council by the Environment Committee at its meeting on 4th April 2007. Council was asked to consider further the proposal to joint fund a PCSO for the village, particularly in view of the interest shown at the Annual Parish Meeting. Council was reminded that the cost to the Council would be around £13,500 plus a one-off start up cost of £1,088. This information needed to be checked as several months had passed since the proposal was first investigated. Since the matter was first considered Danbury had been allocated a further PC and a further PCSO.

Members discussed this item in depth. Several members spoke against the scheme, with concerns including the potential costs of the scheme and the whether a further PCSO was required or would solve the problems of vandalism etc. Cllr Hawkins wished the Council to investigate the possibility of part-funding a youth worker as an alternative. After a full debate Cllr Brooks proposed that the Council should not pursue the scheme to part-fund a PCSO. This was seconded by Cllr Telling. In a vote, the proposal was agreed by 10 members votes to 1, with 3 abstentions.

RESOLVED: that the Parish Council does not proceed with the scheme to part-fund a PCSO.

47 Emergency Plan/ Disaster Recovery

A written report from the Clerk on progress with the draft Emergency Plan was received. The draft was based on a model Plan provided by CBC. Cllr Brooks was the Emergency Planning delegate for Danbury and had details of key-holders of buildings and three teams of volunteers. The possible need for a deputy to Cllr Brooks was discussed. The Emergency Planning Box held in the Parish Office also contained necessary information, including an Electoral Roll for the village. When updated, the draft Emergency Plan would be forwarded to CBC for checking and subsequently sent to the Police, Fire Service, and Ambulance Service.

RESOLVED: that the Chairman of the Council meet with Cllr Brooks and the Clerk to complete the draft plan and that the item be brought back to Council in September.

48 Parish Council Charter

Council noted that no further communication had been received from the Borough Council regarding Charters for Parish Councils.

49 Chelmsford Citizens Advice Bureau

Cllr Thomson had attended the Annual General Meeting of the CAB at Highlands House on 10th July 2007. He reported that the meeting had been interesting, particularly in relation to the fundraising needs of the charity, but there were no issues to raise with the Council.

50 Grants and Donations

Council noted that letters of thanks for the Council's grants had been received from the Parochial Church Council of St John Baptist, Danbury, and from Danbury Community Transport Ltd.

51 Reports from Committees

51.1 Planning: Cllr Allen reported on planning applications at Ludgores Farm, including a retrospective application for the erection of lighting around an existing ménage which had been refused by CBC. At the suggestion of the Town Planning Department, the Committee had drawn up a document giving its views on the outcomes of a number of completed developments. Cllr Allen had not yet heard from Derek Stebbing at CBC regarding problems with the Sustainability Appraisal for the Danbury Planning Framework.

51.2 Resources: Cllr Brooks reported that matters discussed had mostly been financial and accounting matters. All staff contracts were now in place. The Committee had also considered requests under the Freedom of Information Act.

51.3 Environment: There was no report as the Chairman of Environment Committee was on holiday.

51.4 Facilities: Cllr Hawkins noted that several requests had been received from Danbury Community Association for works to be done at the Sports & Social Centre. The Committee would be considering whether a qualified Surveyor should be employed to inspect the building.

52 Best Kept Village Competition 2007

The Council was delighted that Danbury had been awarded the winning place in the Calor Village of the Year Competition, Class 1. Cllr Keeler and the Clerk had attended the presentation where the village was awarded £150, a framed certificate and a commemorative brass plaque. There was also a parish sign, to be held for one year, which was required to be transported from the previous winner, Great Dunmow, and erected in the village.

It was noted that the cost of moving the sign would be in the region of £100, and it was a condition of the prize that the sign be erected in Danbury. Members suggested that a local firm be asked to transport the sign as a gesture of goodwill.

Council agreed that letters of thanks be sent to all the people who had contributed to the village's success. Members also thanked the staff for their hard work in contributing to the competition.

Comments from the judges of the competition were circulated to the meeting. It was noted that the Public Conveniences had scored very poorly, as had been the case the previous year. It was agreed that the condition of the toilets should be raised with CBC.

RESOLVED:

- a) that the staff investigate whether the sign could be moved and erected more cheaply than the quoted £100, and that, should no cheaper option be found, payment of £100.00 plus VAT be authorised;
- b) that the staff investigate and determine a suitable location for the sign;
- c) the Clerk write to Chelmsford Borough Council regarding the poor condition of the Public Conveniences in Danbury.

53 Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED: that, in accordance with S1 of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 and in view of the nature of the business to be discussed, it was

in the opinion of the Committee advisable that the Public and Press be excluded and that they be instructed to withdraw.

54 Freedom of Information Requests

This item had been placed on the Agenda at the request of the Chairman of the Council. Cllr Berlyn reported that, further to Minute 60 of the Resources Committee meeting held on 18th July 2007, a legal advisor had been appointed to advise the Council on a requests made by a member of the public under the Freedom of Information Act. A reply had been forwarded to the resident as drafted by the legal advisor.

55 Forthcoming meetings

26th September and 28th November 2007.

Business having been concluded, the Chairman closed the meeting at 10.15pm.

Signed: Chairman

Date: