

85 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllrs A Allen and M Telling. The Chairman expressed the Council's condolences to Cllr Allen, who was absent in connection with the recent death of his father.

86 Declarations of Interest

Members were reminded that they were required to declare any personal or prejudicial interests they knew they might have in items of business on the meeting's agenda. They were reminded that they would need to repeat their declaration at the appropriate point in the meeting and to leave the room if the interest was a prejudicial one. Unforeseen interests must be declared similarly at the appropriate time. No declarations were made.

87 Minutes of the last meeting

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 26th September 2007 be approved and signed as a correct record.

88 Leases

88.1 Bowling Club Lease

Members discussed two matters regarding the draft lease which had been raised by the Club's solicitor through the Parish Council's solicitor.

88.1.1 Area of the lease: Council was asked to confirm the physical area to which the lease related, and a marked plan was received.

RESOLVED: that the area covered by the lease be confirmed as shown on the plan.

88.1.2 Rent review: The Club asked that the periodic rent review be linked to retail price index changes. Members noted that the 15 year lease specified a rent review every five years. It was explained that the term 'rent' related to the sum, currently £1000, paid by the Club in addition to the reimbursement of the costs of maintaining the green. After discussion, Cllr Hawkins proposed that the rent review be based on changes in the RPI over the period covered by the review. This was agreed by a majority vote, with two abstentions and no votes against.

RESOLVED: that the five-yearly review of the Bowling Club rent be based on changes in the Retail Price Index over the five years covered by the review.

88.1.3 75th Anniversary Lunch: The Chairman reported that he had attended the Bowling Club's Annual Lunch and, on behalf of the Parish Council, had presented the Club with a glass bowl to commemorate its 75th Anniversary. The bowl was engraved with figures of bowlers and inscribed. It was reported that the Club was delighted with the gift and a letter of thanks had since been received. The cost of £100.00 had been taken from the Chairman's Fund.

88.2 Eves Corner Lease

The National Trust had submitted a revised lease covering the way-leave for the electricity cable for the Christmas Lights. Two signatures had been required by members. The Chairman of the Council and the Chairman of Facilities had therefore signed the document, with the Clerk acting as witness.

RESOLVED: that the signing of the revised lease by the Chairman of Council and the Chairman of Facilities Committee be formally approved.

89 Precept for 2008/09

89.1 Small Grants Scheme – requests for 2008/09

Cllr Wood presented the recommendations of Resources Committee regarding the award of grants, details of which were circulated. It was noted that the grant to the Danbury Community Bus had been reduced this year, and that an application from the DCA had been rejected as it failed to comply with the requirement to provide quotations. The Chairman of Council and the Clerk would be meeting with officers of the Village Hall to explore whether the CCTV, for which their grant was provided, could cover the play area on Dawson Field.

RESOLVED: that the award of grants totalling £5292.50 to local organisations be approved as shown below:

Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 Section 19 and Local Government Act 1972 Section 214(6)

i)	PCC St John the Baptist	For maintenance of Church Green and the churchyard	£1375.00
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Crime and Disorder Act 1998, Sections 55 & 56

ii)	Danbury Village Hall	To install CCTV system at the Village Hall	£1750.00
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Local Government Act 1972 Section 137

The Council was of the opinion that the expenditure in items vii to x below satisfied the terms of Section 137 of the LGA 1972 (as amended by LG & HA 1989 s36):

iii)	Danbury Community Transport	Towards a fund to purchase a new bus	£1000.00
iv)	Danbury Pre-Schools	For 50 new chairs	£467.50
v)	The National Trust	Urgent tree works – land at High Common	700.00

Total £5292.50

89.2 Precept for 2008/09

Cllr Whiteing introduced the Resources Committee's budget proposal of £166,000 for the next financial year. This represented an increase on the current year of £8,000, or just over 5% - around £4 per household per annum.

Cllr Whiteing explained that, although £17,000 would be saved with the ending of a Public Works Loan, Facilities Committee had requested £28,000 for the year, of which £20,000 was for necessary maintenance work to the Sports & Social Centre.

No further funds for the Drainage & Car Parks project had been included in the budget, as it was expected that sufficient funds were already earmarked and carried forward for the continuation of the drainage work and to cover the interest on a new Public Works loan for the car parks. Earmarked funds were also being carried forward towards initial stages of the review of the Parish Plan.

After discussion Cllr Whiteing proposed that the Resources Committee's Precept proposal be approved. This was seconded by Cllr Powell and agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED: that the Precept request for the 2008/09 financial year be set at £166,000.

90 Parish Plan Review

Cllr A Wells had offered to lead the Parish Plan review process and was in discussion with Cllr Allen, who had led the original project group. He hoped to report on his initial work at the next meeting. The Chairman thanked Cllr Wells for taking on the leadership of the review.

RESOLVED: that Cllr Wells make his report at the next meeting.

91 Danbury Medical Centre

It was understood that the Primary Care Trust had now agreed the funding for the new Centre, also that the agreement with the Trustees of Hitchcock's Field for the purchase of the land included a provision protecting the remainder of the field from development. No information was available yet on the future of the existing Medical Centre buildings. A planning application for the new Centre was awaited, and the Parish Council would arrange a public meeting once the application was received.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted and that, as previously agreed, a public meeting be arranged once a planning application was received.

92 Publicity

92.1 Timetable of Meetings 2008

The Chairman of Facilities Committee had requested that the meeting of the Committee in December 2008 be moved to Tuesday 9th December.

RESOLVED: that the meeting date be changed as requested.

92.2 Danbury Times

The Autumn issue was now published and being delivered around the village. Cllr Wood reported that the Spring issue would need to be finalised by 25th February 2008 in order to ensure publication before the Annual Parish Meeting. The Chairman thanked Cllr Wood and the Publicity team for their work.

92.3 Annual Parish Meeting 2008

The Village Hall had been booked for the event on the evening of Wednesday 2nd April. Kate Felus, who had produced the new booklet on Danbury Country Park, had been invited and had agreed to attend as a guest speaker. However, she had requested a fee of £100, together with a mileage payment to and from her home in Sussex of £72 (40p per mile for 180 mile round trip). After discussion of this request, Cllr Clacy proposed that the invitation be withdrawn, and this was agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED: that the invitation to Ms Felus be withdrawn and an alternative speaker sought.

93 Parish Council Retirement Policy

Further to the decision of Resources Committee on 18th September 2007 (minute 66) Council was asked to approve the draft Retirement Policy for Staff with the amendment that the default retirement age for new employees would be 70, while remaining at 65 for existing staff.

RESOLVED: that the amended Retirement Policy be approved.

94 Parish Council Emergency Plan/Business Continuity Plan

The draft document had been circulated and was discussed. It was suggested that the plan should be tested, or partially tested, to ensure that it was sound. Members

were asked to bear in mind that the staff's personal phone numbers were shown in the Plan and were not to be published or used except in an emergency.

RESOLVED:

- a) that the Emergency Plan / Business Continuity Plan be approved;
- b) that the Plan be reviewed annually;
- c) that Resources Committee be instructed to consider ways of testing the plan.

95 Annual Return for 2006/07

Further to Minute 90 of Resources Committee (24th October 2007) it was reported that the 2006/07 Annual Return had been passed by Lubbock Fine, the External Auditor.

RESOLVED: that the notice of closure of Audit for 2006/07 be published.

96 Reports from Village Organisations

96.1 Landisdale Charity

Cllr Keeler reported that the date of the Trustees meeting had been changed so that it clashed with a Parish Council meeting and he had therefore been unable to attend. He understood that the Trustees were reviewing the status of Sandpit Field.

96.2 Danbury Youth Club

Cllr Hawkins had attended the Club's Annual General Meeting. The Club was currently meeting only once a month due to a shortage of male helpers. The Club felt that attendance would improve if meetings were more frequent.

97 Corporate Identity of Parish Council

Discussion of this item was deferred.

98 Mid-Essex Area Forum 13th November 2007

Cllr Clacy had attended the meeting on behalf of the Council. He reported, in particular, that the grants made to Local Planning Authorities would in future be related to the number of new homes they had approved, and that road accident figures had improved except in relation to motorcycles. Cllr Clacy also reported on the closure of some rural post offices and on a presentation given by youth organisations.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted.

99 NALC Chief Executive's Report, September 2007: Parish and Town Councils – Development of the Sector

The report, which considered the implications of the Local Government Bill and other current Government initiatives for Town and Parish Councils, was noted.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted.

100 Emergency Planning Officer

Due to the unexpected death of Cllr Brooks, the Parish Council required a new Emergency Planning Officer to work with the CBC Emergency Planning Department. Any councillor interested in taking on this role was invited to contact the Clerk.

101 Vacancy for a Parish Councillor

There was a vacancy on the Council as a result of the death of Cllr Brooks.

RESOLVED: that a notice of the vacancy be published in the New Year.

102 Additional Councillor for Resources

Following the death of Cllr Brooks, an additional member was required for this Committee. Cllr Clacy volunteered to serve on the Committee and was thanked by the Chairman.

RESOLVED: that Cllr Clacy be appointed to serve on the Resources Committee.

103 Reports from Committees

In addition to the minutes received, the following reports were made:

103.1 Facilities

103.1.1 Youth Shelter: The Committee had considered the request from the Neighbourhood Action Panel (NAP) that the Parish Council install a youth shelter in the centre of the village. The proposal was strongly supported by the police. The Committee had not included a sum for the shelter in its budget and had agreed that grants should be sought.

The Committee had agreed to propose to Parish Council that the provision of a youth shelter be approved in principle, subject to the equipment and its location being acceptable to the Council. The Chairman of Council proposed that this be agreed, and the proposal was seconded by Cllr Clacy and agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED: that the Parish Council agreed in principle to provide a youth shelter in the village, subject to the equipment and its location being acceptable to the Council.

103.1.2 New Tractor: The new tractor had now been received. The Groundsman had undertaken a training course in using the new vehicle and had achieved excellent results.

103.2 Environment

Cllr Whiteing drew attention to the Committee's decision to support the proposal from the National Trust that an area of Danbury Common be designated for cycling. He reported that he had now stepped down as Chairman of Environment because he had agreed to resume Chairmanship of Resources following the death of Cllr Brooks.

104 Drainage and Car Parking Project

Alan Lewis of the Consultants, TTS, was preparing specifications for the drainage works and these were expected shortly. The Project Group would then be required to decide which items it wished to submit to outside tender. The information was noted.

105 Christmas Tree Update

The Clerk reported that the trench piping had been connected. The planned lighting connection by EDF Energy had been delayed as the lighting bollard had been lost by the supplier or the manufacturer. McDonald Lighting had installed two temporary metal mini pillars as an interim measure until such time as the original lighting bollard could be located or replaced. This had incurred an additional cost of £350.00 which should be passed on to the pillar supplier, Knightsbridge Lighting. Once the correct pillar was installed the Clerk would then arrange for the meter connection.

RESOLVED: that the additional cost of £350 for the temporary pillars be approved and that the Clerk attempt to reclaim this cost from the supplier.

106 Danbury Country Park

106.1 Country Park Forum It was noted that a meeting of the Forum would be held either later in December 2007 or in January 2008.

106.2 Former Warden's House

It was reported that the decision of the County Council to dispose of the warden's house had been taken in the Autumn of 2006 but the Parish Council had been unaware of this until recently. Cllr Martin's office had apologised for not informing the Council at the time. The house and a portion of land had now been sold into private ownership and a planning application to renovate and extend the house had been approved.

107 Parish Council Charter

Councillors were reminded of the background to the Parish Council Charter proposals and of the potential benefits, especially for Quality Councils. Chelmsford Borough Council seemed reluctant to implement the procedure, but other district councils, notably Braintree, already had some Charters in place. After discussion, members were unanimous in agreeing that the matter should be pursued with the Borough Council.

RESOLVED: that the Clerk take steps to escalate progress on the question of a Charter for the Parish Council.

108 Chelmsford Borough Council's Mobile Customer Information Service

It was reported that the CBC's Mobile Customer Information Service was visiting local parishes at various locations across the Borough to provide information and advice on a wide range of Council services.

RESOLVED: that CBC be asked to arrange for the mobile service to visit Danbury, preferably on a Saturday when more people would be able to attend.

109 Matters for report

The Clerk reported that ECC was to hold workshops for Parish Councils on the new Local Area Agreements. The workshops were scheduled for Wednesday 16th January and Wednesday 30th January 2008. The second meeting clashed with a meeting of Parish Council but it was important that the Council be represented. The Clerk had reserved two places at each workshop.

Members were disappointed to note that Baker's hardware shop in Little Baddow Road was to close in the new year. It was suggested that the Clerk write to the company for further information.

110 Dates of meetings in 2008

30th January

19th March

2nd April – Annual Parish Meeting

7th May – Annual Council meeting (start of Council year)

30th July

24th September

26th November

Business having been concluded, the Chairman expressed his good wishes to members and staff for the Christmas season and closed the meeting at 10.20pm.

Signed: Chairman

Date: