

DANBURY PARISH COUNCIL
A Quality Council



Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 21 April 2008
at 8.00pm in the Village Hall, Danbury

Present: Parish Cllrs: A Allen, S Berlyn, D Bolwell, H Clacy, F Hawkins, A Keeler, J Langley, D Powell, M Telling, J Thomson, J Wells, D Whiteing and M Wood; Borough Cllr R Shepherd, County Cllr P Martin; ECC Officers Ms G Beale and Ms K Payne; Mr R Wallace, National Trust; Mr G Wren, First Responders; and approximately 100 members of the public, including representatives of around 22 local clubs and organisations.

In attendance: Mrs M Saunders (Parish Clerk), Mrs E Blyth (Assistant Clerk)

Apologies for absence: Apologies were received from Parish Cllrs S Freeman and A Wells, Borough Councillors C Kingsley and I Wright, Mr John Alexander and Mr A Owers.

1 Introduction

The Chairman welcomed all present to the meeting, and introduced this year's guest speakers – Gordon Wren of the Danbury area First Responders group, and Richard Wallace of the National Trust. He thanked Borough Cllr Bob Shepherd and County Cllr Peter Martin for attending, and also thanked Gillian Beale and Kathy Payne of Essex County Council who had provided a display and information on road safety issues.

2 First Responders

Mr Wren explained that First Responders was a group of volunteers trained and equipped by the Ambulance Service to give a speedy, local response in cases of cardiac arrest. They were able to begin treatment, including the use of defibrillators, before the arrival of the Ambulance and paramedics, thereby increasing the patient's chances of survival. First Responders was supported by donations, and Mr Wren thanked all those individuals and groups who had contributed. He also stressed the need for more volunteers to come forward to join the group.

Mr Wren answered questions from the floor, and was thanked by the Chairman.

3 The National Trust

Mr Wallace spoke about his work as a National Trust Warden. His working area covered the whole of Essex and the south of Suffolk, and about half of his time was spent in Danbury. Much of Mr Wallace's talk was concerned with Danbury Common, and revealed many fascinating details about the history, geology, flora and fauna of the area, from the Neolithic period to more recent social history. Danbury Common was designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) because of its wealth of habitats. He pointed out that the Common was also an important feature of the village, providing an attractive backdrop to residential areas and allowing many leisure activities.

At the end of his talk Mr Wallace answered questions from the floor. Topics covered included the management of the Common and other areas around Danbury,

questions about 'commoners', and the history of how the land came into the ownership of the National Trust. The Chairman thanked Mr Wallace for his talk.

4 Minutes of the 2007 Annual Parish Meeting

Copies of the minutes of the meeting held on 26th March 2007 were circulated at the meeting. Cllr Wood proposed that the minutes be approved. This was seconded by Cllr Clacy and agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 26th March 2007 be approved as a correct record.

5 Chairman's Report

Cllr Berlyn began by speaking of the unexpected death in the Autumn of 2007 of Cllr Julian Brookes, who was greatly missed by the Council. He was pleased to welcome Cllrs Harry Clacy and Steve Freeman who had joined in the last year, and a new member of staff, Mrs Ann Abbott, who had particular responsibility for Facilities Committee. Cllr Berlyn then reported on the work of the Parish Council and its committees in 2007/08. The following items were mentioned:

- Planning applications for the new Medical Centre and the re-development of Danbury Park Conference Centre had been discussed. A further public meeting would be held in May to discuss the Medical Centre application;
- With financial support from the Danbury Society, arrangements were being made to install a lighting pillar at Eves Corner to be used for carols around the Christmas tree in December and other events through the year;
- The Council had participated in the Parishes Transportation Group which was lobbying for, among other things, a new link road between Maldon and the A12;
- The Council was represented on the Neighbourhood Action Panel (NAP), an initiative of the Police. Plans were under way to install a youth shelter on Dawson Memorial Field with a grant from the Youth Initiative Fund. The local young people had chosen this project as their priority;
- In response to concerns about the speed of traffic on local roads, the Council was seeking volunteers for a Community Speed Watch initiative involving the use of a speed gun to monitor the speed of traffic in the village;
- A new Working Group on the Council was looking at ways to make Danbury a 'greener' village, based on suggestions in a booklet produced by the Government for parish and town councils;
- In consultation with Chelmsford Borough Council, the Parish Council was fulfilling its obligation to prepare an Emergency Plan to be put into effect in the event of a major incident. Residents were invited to put their names forward as volunteers to be called on in an emergency;
- The Parish Council and the village had again won several awards in the past year, including Best Kept Village (Class 1) for the second year running. Awards had been received for the Danbury Times newsletter, for the playing fields and for the children's play area. The Chairman praised the Council's Groundsman, Robin Dickens, for his work in maintaining the fields and play area to award-winning standards;

- The Parish Plan of 2003 was due to be reviewed in the coming year, and a new group would be established to progress this. Volunteers from the public would be invited to take part in the work of the group;
- Caroline Lambert, a former Parish Councillor, had again organised a 'Litter Pick' to remove litter from the village, to be held on Saturday 26th April with refreshments available in the Parish Office. A similar event had been arranged with the local schools;

Cllr Berlyn concluded his report by thanking all Councillors and staff and for their hard work and support over the past twelve months.

6 Report by the Chairman of the Resources Committee

Cllr Whiteing began by paying tribute to the late Cllr Julian Brookes, who had been a member of the Resources Committee for many years and had been elected Chairman of the Committee only months before his death.

Cllr Whiteing presented the audited accounts for the financial year 2006/07, pointing out that these accounts were now nearly a year old, but that the accounts for 2007/08 were still being finalised. A summary of the 2006/07 accounts had been published in the recent edition of Danbury Times, showing in the form of a pie chart how the Council's funds had been used. Full copies of the accounts could be seen in the Parish Office. No objections were made to the accounts.

The Parish Council had set the Precept for the financial year 2008/09 at £166,000. The Council had ensured that the increase was less than 5% over the previous year. He reminded the meeting that the Council's financial accounts were overseen by a Government appointed External Auditor as well as by an Internal Auditor, which was an independent company appointed by the Council.

7 Public question time

The Chairman invited questions and comments from the floor. Issues raised and discussed included the following:

- Concerns about the closure of several businesses in the village, including Baker's hardware store, the party shop at Eves Corner and the flower shop near the Griffin. Cllr Berlyn said that the Parish Council shared these concerns but was not sure what it could do to help;
- The advertising of a site in Colemans Lane as suitable for a Travellers' community. The Parish Council had no additional information;
- The timing of improvements to the car parks outside the Sports & Social Centre and in Mayes Lane. Cllr Berlyn explained the stages of the Drainage & Car Parks project and pointed out that a public loan might be needed to complete the work;
- Chelmer Housing Partnership was reported as having plans to redevelop part of Rumsey Fields and demolishing the garages there. The Council had no information about this;
- The likelihood of the owner of the boarded up Old Tea Rooms at Runsell Green taking action to renovate the property. Cllr Berlyn asked the Parish Clerk to look into the current situation with Chelmsford Borough Council;

- The Parish Council was asked whether it had considered switching off street lights in the village overnight as was happening in other places such as Maldon. Cllr Peter Martin responded to this question as street lighting was a County Council responsibility. He explained that the reduction in lighting was currently at an experimental stage and reports were being studied. If the scheme was a success it would be rolled out to other areas of the County. A member of the public queried whether domestic power bills would increase as a result, and Cllr Martin agreed to look into this.
- Congratulations were expressed to the Parish Council on the informative village website (www.danbury-essex.gov.uk);
- A member of the Danbury Society pointed out that the date published in Danbury Times for the Annual Art Exhibition in 2008 was incorrect. The Chairman apologised for this and the correct date was noted;
- Cllr David Whiteing who was co-ordinating Neighbourhood Watch in Danbury mentioned his email newsletter and encouraged anyone who would like to receive it to give him their details. He reported that there had apparently been a significant reduction in crime in the area.

8 Conclusion

At the conclusion of questions and discussion, the Revd Canon Graham Blyth thanked Cllr Berlyn and the Parish Council for the work they did throughout the year in support of the village. The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and drew the meeting to a close at 9.34pm.

Signed: (Chairman)

Date: