

108 Charters

The Clerk reported that she had attended a Steering Group meeting on 20th November 2008, along with representatives of CBC and other Parish Councils, at which the draft Charter had been discussed. This related only to Part 1 of the Charter, applying to all parish councils, and focussed on working in partnership. The revised draft would be circulated to Parish Councils for 10 weeks of public consultation. The Clerk was thanked for attending the meeting.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted.

109 Mid- Essex Forum

Cllr Clacy had attended the latest meeting and reported that business had included a presentation on population statistics for the mid-Essex area. There had also been a report from a working group looking at rural issues, including transport, education, housing etc, over the next 25 years. Cllr Clacy was thanked for his report.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted.

110 Precept for 2009/10

110.1 Small Grants Scheme – requests for 2009/10

Cllr Wood presented the report of the Grants Working Party and the recommendation of Resources Committee regarding the award of grants, details of which were circulated. Four grant payments were recommended. Cllr Wood proposed that the recommendation be accepted and this was seconded by Cllr Hawkins.

Cllr Allen proposed an amendment to remove the payment to the Danbury Scouts as he felt the organisation did not need financial support. Cllr Hawkins spoke against the amendment. There was no seconder for the amendment. The original proposal was then passed by 9 votes to 0, with 4 abstentions.

RESOLVED: that the award of grants totalling £2,650 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)	Parish Church of St John Baptist, Danbury	For maintenance of Church Green and the churchyard	£1,500
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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):

ii)	Danbury Community Transport	Towards annual costs	£800
iii)	Danbury Scout Group	Towards purchase a double canoe	£100
iv)	The National Trust	For management of land at High Common	£250
		Total	£2,650

110.2 Precept for 2009/10

110.2.1 Withdrawal of CBC rate support grant: The Chairman reported information received from CBC that, in order to save money, it was proposing to withdraw the rate support grant paid to parishes. The proposal had still to be ratified by CBC. Cllr Whiteing explained how the rate support grant worked, and said that the effect of its withdrawal would be that the charge paid by Danbury residents for the Parish Council would appear to increase more than was actually the case.

Members wished a letter to be sent to CBC expressing their strong concern at the proposed change, and agreed that if the grant were to be withdrawn it should be made clear to residents that a policy change by the Borough Council was responsible for part of the increase. It was understood that the Association of Chelmsford District and Parish Councils (ACDPC) would be discussing this matter and what action to take at its meeting in the next week.

RESOLVED:

a) that the Clerk write to CBC stating the Parish Council's concern at the proposed removal of the grant;

b) that a decision on issuing information to the village be deferred pending the outcome of the ACDPC meeting and that Resources Committee be authorised to make a decision on this matter.

110.2.2 Precept request for 2009/10: Cllr Whiteing presented the Resources Committee's financial report and recommendation regarding the Precept. He explained that budget requests from committees had been cut back by Resources in order to reduce the increase in the Precept, and he proposed that the Precept for 2009/10 be set at £174,000. This represented an increase of 4.82% over the 2008/09 figure. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Hawkins.

Cllr Powell put forward an amendment to the proposal to reduce the amount in the budget for the Drainage and Car Parks project by £5000, on the basis that the work on the car parks was unlikely to start until the following year. This would reduce the increase in the Precept to 1.8%. The amendment was seconded by Cllr Allen.

There was a discussion of the original proposal and the proposed amendment. Councillors agreed that the Precept increase should be kept low in the current financial climate. However, it was not clear when the work to the car parks would start, and if a public works loan were to be required in the next financial year then repayments would need to be financed. Councillors noted that the budget requests had already been pared down by Resources Committee, and there was concern about the effect on reserves of any unexpected expenses.

After discussion, the amendment proposed by Cllr Powell and seconded by Cllr Allen was put to the vote and was defeated by 4 votes to 9.

The original proposal by Cllr Whiteing, seconded by Cllr Hawkins, was then put to the vote and was passed by 9 votes to 4.

RESOLVED: that the Precept request for the 2009/10 financial year be set at £174,000.

111 Publicity

Cllr Wood reported that the Autumn issue of Danbury Times had been published and distributed. He thanked councillors and others for carrying out the deliveries, and

paid tribute to the work done by Mr Chris Tressider in preparing the copy for the printers. The Chairman thanked Cllr Wood for leading the publicity group.

RESOLVED: that letters of thanks be sent to non-councillors who had assisted with the deliveries of Danbury Times, and that thanks and a gift of four bottles of wine be given to Mr Tressider, monies to be taken from the Chairman's Fund.

112 Emergency Plan for Village

Cllr Freeman, the Council's Emergency Planning Officer, reported that work was progressing and that he had been taking internal and external photographs of the buildings which would be used as emergency centres. These would be added to the information in the plan. The Chairman drew attention to the need for the Plan to cover a 'flu pandemic, which was regarded nationally as a high risk. Cllr Freeman agreed to take this on as part of the Emergency Plan.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted, and that pandemic 'flu be added to the risks covered in the Emergency Plan.

113 Grants Working Party

It was reported that Cllr Clacy had asked to become a member of the Grants Working Party. This was unanimously agreed, with thanks given to Cllr Clacy.

RESOLVED: that Cllr H Clacy be appointed a member of the Grants Working Party.

114 Leave of Absence

Cllr Mrs J Wells had requested a leave of absence from the Parish Council for personal reasons. She expected to be able to resume her duties in July 2009. It was noted that a replacement representative would be needed to serve on the Parishes Transportation Group.

RESOLVED: that Cllr Mrs Wells be granted leave of absence until the Parish Council meeting in July 2009, and that Environment Committee be asked to consider a replacement representative for the Parishes Transportation Group.

115 The making and enforcement of Byelaws

A report was received concerning a forthcoming consultation on a proposed change in the procedures for the implementation of byelaws. Information was also noted regarding fixed penalties under the Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Act 2006.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted.

116 The Local Authorities (Indemnities for Members and Officers) Order 2004

A legal briefing had been received from NALC about the regulations allowing councils to provide an indemnity in relation to any action by a member or officer which had been authorised by the council. The briefing was discussed and members felt that information was needed on the cover already provided under the Council's insurance. It was agreed that this be investigated in order to assess any further action required.

RESOLVED: that the Clerk ascertain the extent of indemnity provided under the current insurance policies.

117 Reports from Committees

117.1 Environment: Cllr Keeler reported that the Committee was continuing to press ECC to carry out highways works which were outstanding.

117.2 Facilities: Cllr Hawkins reported on several requests received in recent years from groups using facilities on Dawson Field to install containers and sheds for storing equipment. Most recently the Bowling Club had asked for a financial contribution towards a shed for the storage of CBC equipment used in the maintenance of the green. Facilities Committee asked the Council to consider formulating a policy regarding requests for storage structures.

It was noted in discussion that the Dawson Field Working Party had in the past recommended against allowing storage containers. Also, there were restrictions on installations in the Conservation Area and planning permission would be required. In relation to the letter from the Bowling Club, which was circulated, it was agreed that no money could be provided as the deadline for the small grants scheme had passed. The Club would need to apply formally to the Parish Council for permission to install a shed, and should provide full details of the proposed installation.

RESOLVED: that the request from the Bowling Club be put into abeyance until full information was provided in a formal request to the Parish Council, and that the Club be informed that no funding would be available from the Council.

No policy on the installation of storage structures on Dawson Field was agreed at the present time.

117.3 Planning: The Planning Committee had reviewed the three-week meeting cycle and had agreed that it was working well. Cllr Allen reported that the planning decision notice for re-development at Danbury Park Conference Centre had been delayed by legal processes relating to the S106 agreement. The Danbury Planning Framework had been completed and should shortly be issued for the required period of public consultation.

117.4 Resources: The Committee had considered four Parish Council documents and recommended that they be given formal approval:

- a) Documents required for Quality Council re-accreditation:
 - 1 Community Engagement Strategy
 - 2 Local Democracy and Citizenship Strategy
- b) Documents required under the Freedom of Information Act 2000:
 - 1 Health and Safety Statement
 - 2 Equality and Diversity Policy

RESOLVED: that the four documents listed above be approved and adopted.

Copies of all four documents would be circulated with the minutes.

118 Reports from Village Organisations

118.1 Danbury Society: Cllr Bolwell reported that he had resigned from the Committee of the Danbury Society, though he remained a member;

118.2 Landisdale Charity: Cllr Keeler reported on the recent meeting of the Trustees. A tenant had now been found for the empty property, and a new trustee had been appointed to fill the vacancy created by the death of Mr Stebbing. The next meeting would be in May 2009.

119 Amendments to Timetable of Meetings for 2009

An additional Planning Meeting had been added for Monday 6th April. The Environment Meeting on 10th June should read Wednesday 10th June, not Monday.

RESOLVED: that the changes be approved.

120 Open Spaces Society

The Society had circulated an appeal for funds to support legal action to defend open spaces and rights of way. The Chairman reminded members that the Society had given help to the Parish Council in the recent past in relation to land usage issues and the Council was a member of the Society. In a vote, one member abstained and all others were in favour of the proposal.

RESOLVED: that a donation of £150 be made to the Open Spaces Society to support legal action to preserve open spaces and rights of way as described in their letter of November 2008, the payment to be made under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972.

121 NALC Report: Development of the Parish and Town Councils Sector

Council received the September 2008 report of the Chief Executive of the National Association of Local Councils, covering major political and organisational developments relating to parish and town councils.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted.

122 Consultation: Code of Conduct for local authority members and employees

Council received a report from the Clerk on the Government's consultation on proposed amendments to the National Code of Conduct for Parish Councils. The amendments included a proposal to extend the Code to officers as well as members. Also received was a letter written by CBC's Legal & Democratic Services Manager, on behalf of the CBC Standards Board, to the Department of Communities & Local Government making a number of comments on the proposals.

After discussion Cllr Hawkins made a proposal that the Council support the letter from the Legal & Democratic Services Manager. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Bolwell. Cllr Powell proposed an amendment to the effect that the Council broadly supported the letter while having reservations in some areas. This was seconded by Cllr Freeman. In a vote the amendment was won by 9 votes to 3, with 1 abstention.

RESOLVED: that the Parish Council broadly supports the letter to the Government from the CBC Legal & Democratic Services Manager, while having reservations on some of the issues raised.

123 Provision of Data Recorder

A further letter had been received from a member of the public on the issue of vehicle activated speed indicator for Danbury. The Clerk had replied to the letter. Parish Council had decided at its meeting on 24th September 2008 (minute 90) not to go ahead with the installation of the device.

RESOLVED: that the letter be noted and no further action be taken.

124 City of Danbury, USA

An initial enquiry had been received from the authorities of Danbury, Connecticut, as to whether Danbury UK might be interested in establishing a 'sister city' relationship.

Cllr Whiteing spoke about previous links between the two Danburys and information was circulated. The Chairman expressed the view that at this stage in the meeting there was insufficient time to do justice to the enquiry and he recommended that the matter be deferred.

RESOLVED: that this matter be deferred for full consideration at the January meeting of the Council.

125 Policy on proposals for the expansion of Stansted Airport

Speakers on both sides of the debate on Stansted expansion had now been heard by Parish Council. Further to minutes 62.3 and 77.2 of Parish Council, members were now asked to formulate a policy as requested by Planning Committee.

After discussion, Cllr Powell made a proposal that the Parish Council recognises the environmental concerns expressed about the proposed expansion of Stansted Airport, but also understands the benefits to the local community in terms of business opportunities. This was seconded by Cllr Whiteing.

Cllr Thomson proposed an amendment as follows: that the Council recognises the environmental concerns expressed about the proposed expansion of Stansted Airport and supports the stance taken by the Stop Stansted Expansion Campaign. This was seconded by Cllr Keeler. The amendment was put to the vote and was lost by 5 votes to 6, with 2 abstentions.

Cllr Powell proposed a second amendment to his original proposal, leaving out the second part and simply recognising the environmental concerns. This was seconded by Cllr Clacy. In a vote, the amendment was won by 8 votes to 4, with 1 abstention.

RESOLVED: that Danbury Parish Council recognises the environmental concerns expressed about the proposed expansion of Stansted Airport.

126 Matters for Report (for information only)

Cllr Whiteing reported that the Police representatives had failed to attend the last scheduled meeting of the Neighbourhood Action Panel.

127 Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED: that, in accordance with S.1 of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, in view of the nature of the business to be discussed it was in the opinion of the Council advisable that the Press and the Public be required to withdraw. No members of the press or public were present.

128 Bowling Club Lease

The Clerk reported that the Club had agreed to the Parish Council's proposals regarding the formulation of the rent and the review period for the rent. The final draft of the Lease had been received from the Council's solicitor but had not yet been seen by the Club.

RESOLVED: that further discussion be deferred to the January meeting to allow time for the Bowling Club to study the final draft of the Lease.

129 Drainage and Car Parks Project

As reported at Facilities Committee, further questions about the next stage of the works had been answered in writing. Details were circulated. The Clerk now sought formal agreement to place an order for the works.

RESOLVED: that an order be placed for the works.

130 British Legion Hut Survey

RESOLVED: that this matter be deferred to the January 2009 meeting to allow Resources Committee to consider the survey results.

131 Dates of Meetings in 2009

28th January, 25th March, 22nd April Annual Parish Meeting, 6th May Annual Parish Council, 29th July, 30th September and 25th November.

Business having been concluded, the Chairman closed the meeting at 10.23pm.

Signed: Cllr S Berlyn, Chairman

Date: