

DANBURY PARISH COUNCIL

A Quality Council



ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the held on 14th October 2009 at the Parish Office

Present: Councillors A Keeler (Chairman), S. Berlyn, (ex officio) D. Bolwell, S. Freeman, A. Pemberton, J Thomson, D Whiteing,

In attendance: The Clerk and Cllr Allen

47 Speaker – Richard Wallace from National Trust – plus 2 cyclists

47.1 Current Situation

Richard Wallace from the National Trust brought 2 cyclists to the meeting with him. The use of the areas of old gravel workings by local mountain bikers has been going on for the last 20 years. One area previously used by them has been filled in but they are now using a site that provides steep downhill biking experience. Some digging and construction of ramps has been undertaken but no wooden structures have been introduced. The whole of the common is notified as SSSI for its acid grassland interest. The damage caused to the SSI by this activity is arguably minimal. The area, although close to a bridleway is away from the main public areas of the common. There are occasional conflicts of use between the biking activity, horse-riders using the common, dog walkers and others enjoying the open access of the common. Some bicycles were brought on to the site in vans with parking taking place along the bridleway. Efforts have been made to remove the parking by placing tree stumps and vegetation. Notices have been placed to promote the SSI interest of the site and highlighting damage which can be caused by cyclists to bridleways by quoting cyclists legal responsibilities.

47.2 Issues

The site seems to be covered by the Mines and Quarries Act and if the letter of the law was followed the site would be fenced to prevent all visitors from coming too close to the slope edges and gravel working faces.

It is a well known popular site and caters for many different ages

47.3 Management

This is an activity which is not easy to eliminate from the common. It is undertaken in one of the less sensitive areas of the common and not unduly affecting the SSSI interest of the common. Natural England was not particularly concerned about the impact that this activity is having on nature conservation interests but with a tighter set of rules. The Trust does have a duty of care under the Mines and Quarries Act - the danger association with old gravel workings are obvious and with suitable information posted to warn people of unforeseen hazards.

This activity contributes to peoples need for space and exercise a place to play. There will be some time needed to negotiate new arrangements so that it is provided in a more contained manner.

Since the experiment began there has been less illegal parking on Trust property.

Members of the Council raised the following concerns:

- The National Trust were here to conserve areas and leave them open
- Bikers were coming from outside the village and causing parking problems
- The use of the site should not be publicised
- Access of the land should be given by the Secretary of State as the cyclists were there illegally
- Parking at this end of the common was causing a problem especially Copt Hill
- Litter and general safety needed to be addressed
- The Common needs to be managed and should work in partnership with the cyclists and other parties
- Unacceptable behaviour cannot be tolerated
- The common also used by local young people and youngsters learn to ride cycles on this area which is a good thing

The experiment (including a set of site rules) had been completed in consultation with a wide range of people. Natural England had a remit to offer relaxation and public well being. A designated area of the common was being used to stop expansion and help the management of the heathland. A project was being completed with Writtle Agricultural College on a proposed flood area.

Discussions had been held with cyclists and the cyclists had help erect stud posts. The cyclists present had also cleared litter from the site and wished to work in co-operation with all parties. Recently the site had suddenly become more popular which they were not happy about either. It had not been envisaged the increase in the numbers of cyclists that would be coming to the site.

A request was made for a meeting between the Police, Essex County Highways the Cyclists, the National Trust and the Parish Council.

A further request was made to the National Trust to letter drop the area to explain what was happening and the length of the experiment which was to be 1 year.

Richard Wallace and the cyclists left the meeting.

48 Speaker – Tim Shand Energy Trust

Tim Shand came from the Energy Savings Trust. The Trust had been based in Witham since the early 1990's. Their remit was how to reduce energy to help with Climate Change. The Trust had worked primarily with Maldon District Council and Colchester Borough Council but was trying to work with parish councils. They were trying to help residents to insulate their homes. Was there any way the parish council could help with informing the elderly of the grants available? It would be great to hear any ideas.

Members were concerned regarding questionnaires relating to the energy efficiency of the housing stock within Borough which had been circulated by Chelmsford Borough Council as residents had thought there was an ulterior motive to ascertaining information for rateable values and increasing Council tax many had not been completed.

There was concerns expressed that residents were reducing the levels of energy usage but the energy providers was still presenting large profits. Some Members

had researched the question of using solar panels but discovered that the pay-back time was very long.

The Freedom Tariff was explained which is coming into effect 1st April, 2010 where anyone who produces electricity above that which they consume can receive payment back under this scheme. (Mr Shand would send figures after the meeting)

The Energy Trust main target was home insulation as this was the most cost efficient.

Mr Shand left the meeting.

49 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr J Langley, Cllr Wood and outside representative John Bowen.

50 Declarations of Interest

Members are required to declare any personal or prejudicial interest they know they have in items of business on the meeting's agenda. They were reminded that they will need to repeat their declaration at the appropriate point in the meeting and to leave the room if the interest is a prejudicial one. Unforeseen interests must be declared similarly at the appropriate time.
None were declared.

51 Public Question Time Limited to 15 Minutes

1 Scout attended completing their Gold Scout Award.

1 Member of the Public attended raising the following concerns in Copt Hill:-

- Cycles riding on The Common at 2 a.m.
- Parking in Copt Hill which was extremely bad 5 – 6 weeks ago and is continuing to be so
- Vans coming containing several cycles
- The parking was not on residents land but Highway land
- Residents would not want to see double yellow lines
- It was impossible for residents to get cars out of their drives as the road was blocked
- Cyclists leaving large amounts of litter including bicycle tyres
- Residents picking up the litter themselves
- Suddenly the area had been flooded with cyclists

Members stated that they were aware of the problem. Richard Wallace from the National Trust had spoken on the subject as the first item on the Agenda.

52 Minutes of Environment Committee held on 9th September, 2009,

A challenge to the Minutes had been received from Cllr Allen but it was explained that this was under the section where a talk was being given and no resolutions should be included in this part of the meeting.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of Environment Committee held on 9th September, 2009, be approved and signed as a correct record.

54 Green Village Competition

Members unanimously agreed not to enter the Green Village Competition.

RESOLVED: that Danbury does not enter the Green Village Competition.

55 Footpaths

55.1 Parish Paths Partnership

Danbury had a grant of £250.00 which was available for works through the Parish Paths Partnership. No decision was made on how the monies should be spent.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted.

55.2 Footpath Map to be placed on Web-Site

This was being dealt with by the Assistant Clerk.

RESOLVED: that this information be noted.

55.4 Report from Footpaths Officer

This item and the next item were taken together.

55.5 Annual General Meeting to be held on 17th September, 2009

Cllrs Bolwell and Pemberton had attended the Annual General Meeting on 17th September, 2009. There had been about 60 people who had attended. An Annual Report had been circulated there was a copy in the Parish Office if any wished to read the document. Several compliments were received regarding the Danbury Footpaths Map. There were also changes in the Community Action Team and from 1st October, 2009 Matthew Hodgkinson was the new Parish Paths Officer for the Danbury area.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted.

55.6 Access Footpath A414 opposite Riffhams Lane

The Clerk had written to the Footpaths Office (Public Rights of Way) at Essex County Council regarding this item.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted.

56 Highways Matters

56.1 List of Roads for Repair

56.2 Little Baddow Road including Eves Corner

Under repair at the current time. Eves Corner parking bay being completed at the same time.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted.

56.3 Pillar Box Hyde Lane/Maldon Road

The levels and wet weather slime by pillar box. The matter was being investigated by Essex County Council.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted.

56.4 Runsell Green

Further complaints had been received regarding parking on Runsell Green. The notice is now in place. It was decided to see how the notice worked before installing

bollards at this location. If necessary they would be installed. The groundsman would require assistance for this work

RESOLVED: that a) the information be noted.
b) the post would be installed if necessary with assistance from a contractor

57 Quarries

57.1 St Cleres Hall

Correspondence had been sent. No further correspondence received.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted.

57.2 Royal Oak Quarry

Essex County Council was still arranging the meeting. The Clerk had checked but unfortunately the person dealing with this was away at a Public Inquiry.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted.

57.3 Sandon Quarry

Nothing further to report.

57.4 Proposed site at Tyndales Farm

Consultation on further new sites was being dealt with at Planning. No further new sites for Danbury.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted.

58 Parishes Transportation Group

Cllr Berlyn had attended the last meeting. It was still thought that it was beneficial for the Council to part of the transportation group. A request had been made to review the strategic objectives of the group and produce a draft strategic plan.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted.

59 Bus Shelters

59.1 Bus shelter opposite The Avenue (Maldon side)

New suggested location does not seem a possibility. Residents will be written to at the original location.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted.

59.2 Bus Shelter near the Avenue (Chelmsford Side)

The light still needs to be fitted. Essex County Highways were aware.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted.

60 Neighbourhood Action Panel and Policing

Cllr Whiteing reported that no further meetings had taken place since the last Environment Committee. No notification of crimes had been received either.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted

61 Climate Change

A meeting had been arranged which the Clerk was attending at the Essex Association of Local Councils on Tuesday 3rd November, 2009.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted.

62 Danbury Times

The next meeting of the Danbury Times would be held at 2p.m. on Monday 2nd November, 2009. No additional articles were put forward.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted.

63 Bus Passenger Transport

No further meetings had been held. Cllr Freeman would be attending the next meeting at Maldon.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted.

64 Budget for 2010 – 2011

See Appendix I. Members unanimously agreed to put forward the budget of £2100 for consideration by Resources Committee.

RESOLVED: that the sum of £2100 be put forward as the budget for the Environment Committee for 2010 – 2011.

65 Letter re Chelmer Housing Partnership

The correspondence had been passed to the Police, Chelmer Housing Partnership and Essex County Council together with Chelmsford Borough Council regarding trees. The member of the public had been informed of this information.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted.

66 Matters for Report only

The Park and Ride at Sandon was being extended by 250 spaces with a further 250 spaces planned. It was unknown if further buses or drivers were to be employed.

67 Dates in 2009

Wednesday 2nd December.

68 Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED: that pursuant to S.1 of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 the meeting be not now open to the public and press for the following items of business and they were instructed to withdraw.

69 Three Year Forecast

The Environment Committee had no items to add.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 10.05 p.m.

Cllr A Keeler, Chairman

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Signed

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Date