

**Danbury Parish Council
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the Meeting held remotely on 18 January 2021 at 7.30pm

Present: Cllrs: A Chapman (Chairman, ex officio), B Hallett (Vice-Chairman), L Anstee, G Chapman, A Keeler

In Attendance: Mrs L Mitchelmore (Assistant Clerk), Ms M Harper (Clerk), County Cllr Spence and one member of the public.

20/21.51 Apologies for Absence

Cllr Berlyn

20/21.52 Declarations of Interest

Members are required to declare any personal or prejudicial interests they know they may have in items of business on the meeting's agenda. They are reminded that they will need to repeat their declaration at the appropriate point in the meeting and leave the room if the interest is a prejudicial one. Unforeseen interests must be declared similarly at the appropriate time. Members have dispensation to discuss and vote in respect of matters relating to the Precept and the DCA.

None

20/21.53 Public Question Time

Members of the public are invited to address the Council, give their views and question the Council on issues on this agenda, or raise issues for future consideration (at the discretion of the Chairman). Members of the public may not take part in the Council meeting itself. At the close of this item members of the public will no longer be permitted to address the Council unless invited to do so by the Chairman. The session will last for a maximum of 15 minutes with any individual contribution lasting a maximum of 5 minutes. Members of the public should address their representation through the Chairman of the meeting.

None

20/21.54 Minutes of the Environment Committee

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Environment Committee meeting held on 16 November 2020 were approved and would be signed as a true record.

20/21.55 Actions from the Minutes

The actions from the minutes were noted. The Assistant Clerk gave an update on the LHP request for in the safety of pedestrians crossing the A414 in the vicinity of Danbury Palace Drive which was still in Validation.

County Cllr Spence joined the meeting and it was agreed to move items 56.2 and 56.3 up the agenda.

20/21.56.2 LHP Request LCHE152104 The Heights Service Road

Members discussed the progress of the application for the one-way system and lay-by at the Heights Service Road with County Councillor Spence. An email from a resident and photographs of the current situation had been circulated prior to the meeting.

Cllr Spence had discussed this application with Essex Highways Officers who would not recommend it due to the significant cost (£81,500) and that it was trying to solve one problem because of another.

Following an email received by Cllr Spence and the Parish Council that day, which had suggested that the issue was exacerbated by visitors to Danbury Lakes parking there rather than use the Car Park (which was not free), Cllr Spence had requested that Officers consider closing the entrance to the park at that end. This would discourage visitor parking at the Heights.

Concerns were raised that by closing the gate, pedestrian visitors would have to walk along the Woodhill Road to access the Park; The Woodhill Road was narrow with no pavements; that the parking was also by residents and those accessing the industrial units; and that the problem began when Danbury Park started charging for the Car Park.

Cllr Spence stated that the scheme was deemed to be of benefit to a very small number of residents and successful schemes were those that benefitted a high number of residents and were related to improving safety. The Parish Council must work out what their highest priorities were in Danbury. Cllr Spence would prefer to prioritise A414 Route Based Strategy which came about because the Parish Council had submitted a number of LHP requests relating to safety of the A414 for pedestrians.

After Cllr Spence had discussed the request for the Route Based Strategy Study for the A414 and left the meeting, members held a brief discussion and agreed that they would return to this matter at the next meeting and consider whether to request a smaller scheme, for a one-way system without the lay-by and review all of the schemes that were currently progressing through the LHP process. The residents who had written to the Council would be informed of the outcome of the meeting.

20/21.56.3 LHP Request LCHE192040 A414 Danbury Route Based Strategy Study

Members discussed funding for the Route Based Strategy Study with County Councillor Spence and whether the impact of the study was likely to justify the Parish Council contributing up to £12,500 towards the cost. An email that had been received by a resident had been circulated prior to the meeting. There was no Parish Council budget available for this in the years 2020/21 or 2021/22.

Cllr Spence gave an update on the results of the vehicle/pedestrian conflict study undertaken at the Zebra Crossing on the A414 adjacent to the Bell and the crossing place on Well Lane. Well Lane was below the threshold for a signalised crossing, however there was a strong case for a signalised crossing on the A414 which brought Cllr Spence to the Route Based Strategy Study. He would be making the case personally for the study at the next meeting of the LHP on 18th March 2021.

Having discussed the funding for the Route Based Strategy Study with Officers, Cllr Spence was hopeful that the scheme may be funded in full. The study would look at the distributions of crossings and junctions and identify where any improvements may be made.

The Committee was concerned that the study would not identify anything that it did not already know and that any recommendations may not be implemented due to lack of funding; however, Cllr Spence was concerned that if the study did not proceed, an opportunity to unlock investment in the A414 would be missed.

Cllr Spence indicated that schemes may be more successful if the Parish Council were to contribute towards the costs. The Scheme for a walkable verge at Penny Royal Lane/Mayes Lane for example may qualify for up to £30,000 from section 106 monies and the scheme may be possible with Match Funding from the Parish Council.

The Committee would wait for the outcome of the LHP Meeting on 18th March 2021.

Cllr Spence enquired as to the Parish Council's views about the proposed Solar Farm and was informed that the Planning Committee would consider it when the application had been received.

The Committee thanked Cllr Spence and he left the meeting.

The Committee was concerned that the Parish Council would not be able to afford to contribute towards the study and questioned whether there was anything more that could be done to improve the A414. It was suggested by one member that the Committee should adhere to its decision not to contribute towards the study.

The committee returned to agenda item 55.

20/21.55 Actions from the Minutes (continued)

Cllr G Chapman gave an update in relation to the Circular Walk Maps. The existing maps needed to be updated and Cllr G Chapman and the Assistant Clerk were considering whether Parish Online would be suitable to map the walks.

20/21.56 Chelmsford Local Highways Panel (LHP)

20/21.56.1 LHP Meetings

It was noted that the next meeting of the LHP would be held on 18th March 2021.

20/21.56.2 LHP Request LCHE152104 The Heights Service Road

The committee had agreed to bring this up the agenda and it was discussed during Agenda Item 55.

20/21.56.3 LHP Request LCHE192040 A414 Danbury Route Based Strategy Study

The committee had agreed to bring this up the agenda and it was discussed during Agenda Item 55.

20/21.56.4 LHP Requests LCHE192024 and LCHE192025

Members noted the results of the initial investigations into the safety of pedestrians crossing the A414 and Well Lane adjacent to Danbury Park School as had been previously discussed with County Cllr Spence.

20/21.57 Trees and Open Spaces

20/21.57.1 Tree Survey

Members received the Annual Tree Survey Report, quotes for the necessary works required in 2020/21 and any additional works for 2021/22 along with a report and recommendations.

The assistant clerk corrected the following points from her report:

Paragraph 3: £1023 should read £1027.

Paragraph 4: Rochester Tree Services should read Rochford Tree Services

Paragraph 6: The provisional cost of a replacement tree included in the costs figure was £270 but this may vary.

The Councillors considered the reports and recommendations as follows:

i) That the works listed in the Assistant Clerk's Report under recommendation i) be completed by the end of March 2021 from the remaining 2020/21 budget – cost £1934.50 (budget available: £2200).

Members were happy for the replacement for tree T4 on Elm Green to be an Elm and emphasised that it must be resistant to Dutch Elm Disease. The Assistant Clerk reminded Members that the cost of the replacement tree had yet to be confirmed and so the cost may vary from the £270 allowed for in the costs.

RESOLVED: that the listed works in recommendation i) of the Assistant Clerk's report be completed by JCM Services by the end of March 2021 at a cost £1934.50.

Proposed: Cllr G Chapman, seconded: Cllr Hallett and all agreed.

ii) That the remaining works be carried out in 2021/22 – cost £5531.5 (budget available £5200 tree works 2021/22 and £331.50 from the emergency tree works budget).

The works identified in the 2019 Tree Survey Report would be carried out by DF Clark - cost of £4506 – as previously agreed by the Environment Committee and budgeted for in the 21/22 budget.

The remaining works recommended in the 2020 Tree Survey Report would be completed by JCM Services – cost £1025

RESOLVED: that DF Clark complete the works recommended from the 2019 Tree Survey Report and JCM Services complete the work from the 2020 Tree Survey Report.

Proposed: Cllr Keeler, seconded Cllr Anstee and all agreed

iii) The willow coppice at Runsell Green be deferred until 2022/23 as per the timescale given in the 2020 Tree Survey Report and confirmed by the tree consultant – cost £200 (include in 2022/23 budget).

RESOLVED: that the willow coppice at Runsell Green be deferred until 2022/23

Proposed: Cllr A Chapman, seconded: Cllr G Chapman and all agreed.

20/21.57.2 Community Woodland at the Dawson Field

i) It was noted that the planting day had taken place on 14 December, however Chelmsford City Council (CCC) were unable to complete all the planting prior to the Christmas break. Due to the current COVID-19 restrictions CCC had planted the semi mature trees and were planning to hold a further day for local volunteers to complete the planting of the whips in March if the current restrictions were removed. If it was not possible to hold a further event for volunteers, CCC would carry out the planting before the end of March and arrange additional volunteers' days to assist with maintenance during May to August.

It was reported that CCC had planted 13 of the 15 semi mature trees purchased by the Parish Council and Danbury Society. The Clerk had contacted CCC to enquire as to the remaining two.

ii) It was noted that responsibility for the Community Woodland had been transferred to the Environment Committee.

20/21.58 Footpaths

Members noted the report from the Footpaths Officer that there is, *"nothing specific to report only a general observation that nearly all footpaths through woods and fields are extremely muddy and sometimes the route is flooded. The route to the Sports and Social Centre is especially hazardous when approached across the field past the beacon."*

The Footpath Officer also stated that Footpath 17 by the allotments and many of the Public Footpaths were wet, muddy, uneven and slippery.

20/21.59 Bus Transportation

The report from the Passenger Transport Representative was noted.

20/21.60 Highways Matters

20/21.60.1

The list of reported highways items was noted.

20/21.60.2

Members considered concerns raised by residents to Cllr G Chapman about the safety of the width of the pavement along the junction of Penny Royal Road with Woodhill Road. The Assistant Clerk would report the overgrown hedge to Essex County Council as it was narrowing the pavement. Signs to warn drivers that pedestrians were using a narrow pavement and my step out into the road to pass each other were suggested by the residents.

20/21.61 Climate Change

Members had received a report from Cllr Anstee and considered the following initiatives:

i) New notices on refuse bins to encourage residents and visitors to take their rubbish home for recycling.

Cllr A Chapman and Cllr Anstee would design a poster to be attached to the bins and they would be printed and laminated in the office.

RESOLVED: that notices would be attached to litter bins to encourage residents and visitors to take their rubbish home for recycling.

ii) Solar Streets - an initiative to encourage residents to consider the installation of solar panels (particularly good timing with the recent project with Danbury Park and St John's Primary Schools).

IDDEA (a solar panels installation, operations and maintenance company), which had implemented a similar scheme in Frome, with the support of Frome Town Council, would undertake all of the necessary community engagement, install the panels and contribute £50 per installation to a community energy project. After a discussion and concern raised about the cost to residents and ability to recoup that cost over time and any potential liability of the Council effectively recommending a company for solar panel installation, Members asked Cllr Anstee to continue research into the initiative and investigate the level of interest amongst residents.

Some residents were interested in pursuing the idea of an Energy Co-op but this would be separate to the Solar Streets Initiative. An energy Co-op may include engagement with the proposed Solar Farm, and Cllr A Chapman, stated that should be no Parish Council engagement with the Solar Farm until a planning application had been considered by the Planning Committee.

20/21.62 Matters for Report (for information only)

Cllr Hallett raised the issue of Dog Waste bins. However, the Clerk reported that Chelmsford City Council did not have the capacity currently to collect the waste from any additional bins.

Cllr Anstee reported that the Danbury society had expressed an interest in collaborating in a Village Terracycle Project. It was suggested that this would be a matter for the Community Engagement Committee. As the Libraries were currently closed and Terracycale were not taking on new locations at present, then it may be necessary to wait until the Social Distancing Rules had been relaxed.

The Assistant Clerk reported that a tree had fallen, blocking the Pedlars Path Bridleway and had been cleared at a cost of £90.

20/21.63 Date of next meeting

The next meeting would be held on 22 March at 7.30pm by Zoom.

There being no more business to transact, the Chairman closed the meeting at 9.28pm.

Chairman

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Signed

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Date