

Danbury Parish Council
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting held remotely on 13th July 2020 at 7.30pm

Present: A Chapman (Chairman, ex officio), S Berlyn (ex officio), G Chapman, A Keeler, J Thombs

In Attendance: Mrs L Mitchelmore (Assistant Clerk), Ms M Harper (Clerk) and a representative of the Danbury Society.

20/21.1 Election of Chair and Vice Chair

It was noted that under The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 the election of Chair and Vice Chair would be postponed until May 2021 in-line with the Parish Council.

20/21.2 Apologies for Absence

Cllrs L Anstee and B Hallett

20/21.3 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

20/21.4 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.

The representative of the Danbury Society addressed the committee with regard to agenda item 20/21 16 A414 Traffic Survey Request. They drew attention to the points made in the Danbury Society's letter to the Parish Council. They also suggested that any survey should include the whole of Danbury to ascertain traffic flows away from the A414.

Cllr A Chapman proposed that the agenda item 20/21.16 be moved up the agenda and all agreed

20/21 16 A414 Traffic Survey Request

A request had been received from the Danbury Society for a new traffic survey for the A414 as the last survey had been in 2016 and they considered that the traffic (including heavy goods vehicles and large vans) had increased significantly since then with the large housing developments in

Maldon, Heybridge and across the Dengie. A resident had also contacted the Parish Office regarding the number of HGVs using Main Road and they had conducted a count which was presented during the meeting.

The request was considered. The last A414 traffic count had been in 2018 at Frettons Corner. As traffic levels were likely to be lower due to the Coronavirus, it was decided to defer the matter until March 2021.

20/21.5 Minutes of the Environment Committee

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 20th January 2020 were approved and would be signed as a true record.

20/21.6 Actions from the Minutes

The actions from the minutes were noted.

20/21.7 Decisions made under delegated powers

Resolved: that the decisions made under delegated powers during the suspension of meetings due to Coronavirus Social Distancing Rules were noted and ratified.

Proposed: Cllr Berlyn Seconded: Cllr Keeler: All agreed.

20/21.8 Parish Council Land

20/21.8.1

Councillors received information relating to the lease of Griffin Meadow and discussed whether to continue as a rolling agreement or to seek to renew the lease.

The lease was currently costing £715 per annum and the Parish Council were responsible for maintaining any ditches, dykes, watercourses, hedges, fences and walls but must have prior written permission from the landlord before planting any trees, shrubs or flowers. The Council was paying to cut the grass and £150 per annum to cut the hedge.

Councillors were concerned that the Parish Council were paying to lease the land but had not been given permission to plant wildflowers and discussed whether there was any benefit to leasing the land.

The clerk would investigate the possibility of extending the lease for a further five or 10 years before any decision could be made as to whether to continue with a rolling agreement or extend the lease.

20/21/8.2

Councillors received information regarding wildlife cameras and discussed whether to purchase them for use on areas around the Dawson Memorial Field. Concerns were raised that the cameras would be vulnerable to vandalism and that if they were battery operated, the batteries would not last for long.

Resolved: that wildlife cameras would not be installed in areas around the Dawson Memorial Field.

20/21.9 Trees

20/21 9.1 Tree Charter

Councillors received a report from the Tree Charter Working Group meeting held on 5th February and considered the following:

i) Recommendation: Not to become a Tree Charter Branch at this time and work towards becoming one and review next year.

Resolved: that the Parish Council would not become a Tree Charter Branch at this time but would work towards becoming one and review next year.

Proposed: Cllr G Chapman. Seconded: Cllr Thombs. Agreed by majority vote.

ii) Recommendation: To agree the Tree Charter Action Plan

Resolved: that the Action Plan be agreed as a potential long-term list of options.

Proposed: Cllr G Chapman. Seconded: Cllr Berlyn. All Agreed.

20/21.9.2

It was noted that the Community Engagement Committee were considering planting a tree for the Danbury Festival.

20/21 9.3 Emergency Tree Works Costs

Emergency works to trees at the Dawson Memorial Field and Elm Green were noted. The report contained an error in section 3.3 that the date should read 2019 and not 2020.

20/21 10 Volunteer and Litter Picking Policies.

Councillors received and considered the proposed Volunteer and Litter Picking Policies and following recommendations;

i) Recommendation: to agree the Volunteer Policy and recommend that it is adopted by the Parish Council.

Councillors requested that paragraph 1.3 be rewritten as it would not be necessary to list associated policies such as the Litter Picking policy.

Councillors requested that paragraph 4.2 relating to DBS checks be rewritten to make it clearer and suggested that there should be a Safeguarding Policy. The paragraph should then state that volunteers must adhere to the Safeguarding Policy. The clerk would recommend that the need for a Safeguarding Policy to the Resources Committee and the Volunteer Policy, once approved, would be set aside until the Safeguarding Policy had been adopted.

Resolved: that paragraphs 1.3 and 4.2 be amended as stated above and be recommended to the Parish Council for approval; and that the clerk recommend the need for a safeguarding policy to the Resources Committee.

ii) Recommendation: to agree the Litter Picking Policy and recommend that it is adopted by the Parish Council.

Councillors expressed concern that the Litter Picking Policy would discourage volunteers and considered that elements, particularly the dos and don'ts should be presented in a softer way. There was a discussion as to whether Litter Picking should be permitted on 40mph roads or where

there was no wide verge or pavement. Councillors were concerned that most of the roads assessed in the policy as being unsafe for Litter Picking were the roads where most Volunteers wanted to Litter Pick.

The Clerk advised Councillors that the safety advice given in the Policy and assessment of suitable roads were in place in the interests of safety and to safeguard the council and volunteers in the event of an accident. Whilst it may be possible to re-present and soften the safety advice, any changes in content would be against the advice of the Clerk.

Councillors requested information to that effect in writing from the Insurance Company.

Cllrs G Chapman and Thombs volunteered to review the policy with the Clerk and Assistant Clerk to re-present the safety advice in a softer way. The Policy would then be recommended to the Resources Committee for approval.

Resolved: that Cllrs G Chapman and Thombs review the policy with the Clerk and Assistant Clerk to produce a more manageable document to be recommended to the Parish Council for approval at their meeting on 29th July 2020.

Proposed: Cllr A Chapman. Seconded: Cllr Thombs. Agreed by majority vote.

20/21.11 Footpaths

The report from the footpath officer was noted.

20/21.12 Bus Transportation

20/21.12.1

It was noted that the Passenger Transport representative reported that the number 31 and Arrow Services had been running mostly on schedule.

20/21.12.2

The action points from the Passenger Transport Meeting held on 11th March 2020 were noted.

20/21.13 Highways Matters

20/21 13.1

The updated list of reported highways items was noted.

20/21.13.2

It was noted that the meeting with the National Trust regarding parking issues at Copt Hill would take place on 15th July and that Cllrs G Chapman and S Berlyn would be in attendance.

20/21.14 Chelmsford Local Highways Panel (LHP)

20/21 14.1

The reports pack from the meeting held 18th June 2020, incorporating the minutes of the 12th March was noted.

20/21 14.2

The progress of the Danbury Schemes submitted to the Local Highways Panel was noted. An update on the schemes in validation had been requested from the design team. The Parish Council representative had been contacted in relation to the outstanding schemes and enquired as to which schemes would be the highest priority. Members identified schemes LCHE192024, 192025, 192026 and 192040.

Funded Schemes scheduled for completion in 20/21 Q3:

- LCHE192006: A414 Maldon Road nr the junction with Hyde Lane: Bend/junction warning signs with SLOW road markings: £5,000.
The design of the scheme had been received and distributed prior to the meeting. Councillors had no comments to make and the Assistant Clerk would feed this back to the Highways Liaison Officer.
- LCHE192004: St John's School, Little Baddow Road: Advisory 20mph with wig-wag lights: £13,500
Cllr Thombs reported that the Headteacher of St John's School had appreciated the support of the Parish Council.

20/21.15 Review of Speed Limits

Councillors received and considered the responses from County Cllr Spence and the Highways Liaison Officer regarding the decision by the Environment Committee to submit LHP requests for a review of the areas in Danbury where there is an abrupt change from a 30 to 60 MPH speed limit and whether anything could be done to make the transition smoother.

Advice from County Councillor Spence was that: there were many parts of the county where there were significant changes in permitted speed and it would be a major policy change to remove such differentials; and he felt that officers would be likely to recommend to the LHP that the measures installed along the Woodhill/Bicknacre Roads needed time to bed in before any other action. After a brief discussion, Cllr Keeler proposed that the Council take the advice from Cllr John Spence and not submit the LHP request at this time.

Resolved: that the Committee would take the advice from Cllr John Spence and not submit the LHP request at this time.

Proposed: Cllr Keeler. Seconded: Cllr G Chapman. All Agreed.

20/21 16 A414 Traffic Survey Request

The committee had agreed to discuss this item immediately after public questions.

20/21 17 Vehicle Activated Signs

Councillors received a report and considered submitting an application to the Local Highways Panel for Vehicle Activated Speed Indicator Devices potentially under a third-party funding agreement (where the Parish Council would contribute towards the cost) and confirm the location/s.

The Clerk clarified that Vehicle Activated Speed Indicator Devices could not be purchased and installed by the Parish Council under the Power of General Competence (*Localism Act 2011, Chp 1*) as it was not something that an individual would be able to undertake. The Parish Council could however enter into a third-party agreement with the Local Highways Panel to fund/contribute towards a device.

The Essex Highways criteria for such a device and the results of recent traffic counts were considered and it was determined that the only area that may qualify would be the Little Baddow

Road. Cllr Berlyn queried whether it would be worth waiting to see how the 20mph limit impacted on traffic speeds once it had been installed.

The Assistant Clerk informed Councillors that the criteria for the provision of Vehicle Activated Signs had been under review where Councils were prepared to enter into third party funding agreements.

Cllr A Chapman suggested that the Assistant Clerk check what the outcome of the review had been and whether the Little Baddow Road would qualify and bring this back to the September meeting. All agreed.

20/21 18 Heavy Goods and delivery vehicles using Riffhams Lane, and concerns raised over vehicular speeds

Councillors received a report and considered submitting an application to the Local Highways Panel for a review of the use of Riffhams Lane by HGVs and delivery vehicles and vehicular speeds; and implementation of any measures recommended as a result of the review. Two residents had raised concerns about the use of the Lane by HGVs and traffic speeds.

A traffic count had been conducted in 2017 and this had shown that the number of HGVs using Riffhams Lane was low. New width restriction and warning signs had been installed at the junction of Riffhams Lane and Main Road but they were difficult to see until a vehicle had begun turning into the lane. The Highways Liaison officer had advised that it was very unlikely that a 60mph road would be reduced to 30mph unless it was in a built-up area.

Resolved: that the Assistant Clerk would check the condition of the existing sign at the junction of Main Road and Riffhams Lane and ask the appropriate authority to move it to a more visible location.

Proposed Cllr Berlyn. Seconded: Cllr Thombs: All agreed.

20/21 19 Hedge Flailing

A report was received and measures that the Parish Council could take in the future to reduce hedge flailing in the area considered.

Cllr G Chapman had raised concern about the condition of a hedgerow and ditch caused by the cutting back, presumably by using a flail, of the hedge along the Woodhill Common Road. The hedge appeared to be recovering well, although the scars on the trees were still visible. Cllr A Chapman was concerned about the condition of not only the hedge but also damage caused to the verge and clogging of the ditch.

After a discussion it was agreed that a letter of complaint would be written to Essex Highways by Cllr A Chapman and the Clerk.

Resolved: that a letter of complaint be written to Essex Highways by Cllr A Chapman and the Clerk.

20/21 20 Tesco Planters

Cllr A Chapman reported that both herself and Cllr Hallett (who was not present at the meeting) would like to withdraw this item from the agenda. The manager of the Tesco had reported that the

planters had been planted three times and that each time, the plants had been stolen. Therefore, Cllrs A Chapman and Hallett no longer considered that this was a viable proposal.

Resolved: that this item be removed from the agenda.

Proposed: Cllr Berlyn. Seconded: Cllr A Chapman: All agreed.

Cllr A Chapman would inform the manager of the Tesco.

20/21.21 Potential items for the 21/22 Environment Committee Budget

Members were asked if they had any ideas for potential budget items/projects for the Environment Committee for the year 2021/22. Cllrs Anstee and A Chapman had made suggestions to the Parish Office.

20/21.22 Matters for Report (for information only)

The Assistant Clerk reported that a complaint had been received regarding the speed of lorries on the A414 and that the resident was recommended to complain directly to the company involved.

There were no other matters for report.

20/21.23 Date of next meeting

Monday 14th September to be held remotely by Zoom.

There being no further business to transact the Chairman closed the meeting at 9.40pm.

Chairman

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Signed

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Date