

DANBURY PARISH COUNCIL

A Quality Council



Minutes of the Meeting held on 27th July 2011 at 7.45pm in the Meeting Room, The Old School House, Main Road, Danbury

Present: Cllrs S Berlyn (Chairman) Mrs S-J Court
 M Wood (Vice Chairman) A Keeler
 A Allen B Kennewell
 D Bolwell W Scaife
 H Clacy J Thomson

In attendance: Mrs M Saunders, Clerk
 Mrs E Blyth, Assistant Clerk
 Ms Rebecca Banks, Project Officer, Essex Bio-Diversity Project

48 Danbury Ridge Hedgerow Survey – Essex Bio-Diversity Project

Rebecca Banks, Project Officer, attended at the invitation of councillors to talk about the Essex Bio-Diversity Project and, in particular, the Hedgerow Survey of the County. She explained the importance of hedgerows as habitats for birds, insects and small mammals, and described the purpose and methodology of the survey. The Project worked to the Hedgerow Survey Handbook produced by DEFRA which provided a standardised method of assessment. The aim, in co-operation with landowners and organisations such as the National Trust and Essex Wildlife Trust, was to identify and assess existing hedges and, if necessary, provide advice on ways to maintain or improve their value as wildlife habitats. In the survey so far the condition of many local hedgerows had exceeded the national target.

At the end of her talk Ms Banks provided an information pack for each councillor and answered questions. Members were interested in available training, and Ms Banks offered to provide a day-time session for the Council in the early Autumn. The Clerk was asked to liaise with Ms Banks to arrange a suitable date.

Ms Banks was then thanked for attending and left the meeting.

49 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllrs Chapman, Pemberton, Powell and Telling.

50 Declarations of Interest

Members were reminded that they must declare any personal or prejudicial interests they had in any items of business on the meeting's agenda. They were reminded that they would need to repeat their declaration at the appropriate point in the meeting and leave the room if the interest was a prejudicial one. Unforeseen interests must similarly be declared at the appropriate time.

Cllr Bolwell declared a personal interest in the application by a prospective councillor by virtue of being acquainted with the applicant (items 53 and 80 below). He did not take part in the vote on the appointment.

51 Public Question Time

Mr J Scott was present in connection with his application for appointment as a councillor.

52 Approval of Minutes

52.1 The Annual Parish Council Minutes of 11th May, 2011 were received. It was noted that in minute 1 and minute 3 the Chairman's and Vice Chairman's year of office should read 2011–2012.

RESOLVED: that with these amendments the minutes of the meeting held on 11th May 2011 be approved and signed.

52.2 The Parish Council minutes of 22nd June 2011 and the Extraordinary Parish Council minutes of 13th July 2011 were received.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meetings held on 22nd June and 13th July 2011 be approved and signed.

53 Co-option of Parish Councillor

Mr John Scott's curriculum vitae was received. Mr Scott spoke briefly about himself and his reasons for wishing to be a parish councillor, and answered questions from members. The Chairman thanked Mr Scott and invited him to remain at the meeting up to the Exclusion of Press and Public (item 79 below) after which a decision would be made on his application.

54 Power of Well Being

Cllrs Kennewell and Scaife had now undergone training in the Power of Well-Being. There was to be a further training session at Witham on Monday 12th September 2011 and the Clerk would be in touch with councillors who had not yet attended.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted.

55 Councillor Dispensations

Councillors who applied for dispensations in order to be able to discuss matters relating to the Sports & Social Centre despite being members of the Centre had had their dispensations approved by the Chelmsford Borough Council Standards Committee on 27th June 2011. The dispensations would run for 4 years, until after the next election.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted.

56 Reports from Organisations

56.1 Landisdale Charity

56.1.1 Representatives of the Charity met with the Chairman of the Council and the Clerk on 22nd July 2011 regarding its 5-acre land-holding adjacent to Little Fields. A report of the meeting was circulated. It was felt that the meeting had been useful and that the Charity now had a clearer idea of the Council's position regarding development in the village. The Charity would like a joint working party to be set up and would produce a paper outlining its key housing aims for the September 2011 Council meeting. The Charity also wished the Council to consider participating in a housing needs survey of the village, to be carried out through the Rural Community Council of Essex.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted.

56.1.2 As the Parish Council had recently resolved (minute 9 of 11th May 2011 refers) not to exercise its right under the approved scheme for the charity to appoint a second 'Nominative Trustee', the Charity had requested that the Council appoint its own nominee Mr Robert Goodall. After discussion members agreed that this would not be appropriate as the Council did not know Mr Goodall, and it was suggested that the Charity should itself appoint its nominee.

RESOLVED: that the Landisdale Charity be informed that the Parish Council did not wish to nominate a second Trustee and that the Charity be asked to make the appointment itself.

56.2 Neighbourhood Watch

It was reported that the new members of the Council had joined Neighbourhood Watch. NW was looking into using its email mailing list as a basis for improving communications in the village on crime and security issues.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted.

57 Strategic Plan for the Council

The first meeting of the Working Group had taken place. Notes from the meeting had been circulated along with a written report from the Group's Chairman, Cllr Wood, and a list of the requirements for Quality Council status. All committees had now considered their own contributions to the Strategic Plan and these would be taken to the next meeting of the Working Group on Thursday 4th August 2011.

The Group's primary focus at the first meeting had been the Danbury Times, including the content and the number of issues per year. Four issues would be preferable to the current two in terms of the requirements of Quality Council status. The non-councillor deliverers of the newsletter had confirmed that they were prepared to deliver 4 issues.

A new Editor was urgently required following the resignation of Cllr Telling and a volunteer was requested for at least the next issue (Autumn 2011). No volunteer was forthcoming. After discussion it was agreed that the Clerk put together a timetable of Publicity Group meetings for the next edition and issue a further request to all councillors for a volunteer to be Editor. Cllr Wood indicated that he was standing down from the Publicity Group.

RESOLVED: that a timetable of Publicity Group meetings to prepare the Autumn issue of Danbury Times be produced and that all councillors be asked whether they could act as Editor for a least the next edition.

58 Leases

58.1 Tennis Club Lease

The lease for the former Parish Office was with the Tennis Club and the Club's approval was awaited. The Club had asked questions regarding the Landlord & Tenants Act as it was required to sign away the automatic right to take over the former Parish Office at the end of 10 years. The new lease was in line with the overall Tennis Club lease, which had 14 years to run, with a break clause at 10 years on the former Parish Office.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted and that once the Tennis Club's approval was received the Chairman of the Council and the Chairman of Facilities be approved to sign the document with the Clerk acting as witness.

58.2 National Trust Lease – Eves Corner

The National Trust had requested that Heads of Terms be signed first. As previously discussed, the lease would no longer require the Parish Council to undertake tree work on the site. The Council would continue to be responsible for the pond, for benches and for the lighting pillar. The cost of the lease to the Council would be £250 per annum.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted, and that the Chairman of Council and the Chairman of Facilities Committee be authorised to sign the lease on behalf of the Council once it was finalised.

58.3 Royal British Legion

The report of the surveyor regarding a Market Rental Value for the former RBL building was awaited. The Clerk had appointed Kemsley LLP to complete this work at a cost of £200, as agreed by Facilities Committee on 13th July 2011.

The Reparation Supervisor had inspected the building and had agreed that the redecoration could be carried out by Reparation workers. Funds for the materials required would be taken from the Buildings' Budget within the Clerk's approved spending limit of £200.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted.

59 Appointment of Solicitors

In an attempt to compare costs, as requested by Council, the Clerk had contacted three firms of solicitors which had been used by other Parish Councils. None would give an hourly rate. They were concerned that, with preparation of a lease, the cost would vary depending on the amount of negotiation required in each case.

In these circumstances the Clerk recommended that for the present financial year 2011–12 the Council should re-appoint Hill & Abbott as the Council's solicitors.

RESOLVED: that Messrs Hill & Abbott be appointed as the Parish Council's solicitors for the 2011-12 financial year.

60 Appointment to Committees

Cllr Brian Kennewell and Cllr Bill Scaife had both requested to join the Facilities and Resources Committees.

RESOLVED: that Cllrs Kennewell and Scaife be appointed to serve on the Facilities and Resources Committees with immediate effect.

61 Revision of Standing Orders

Members considered a short paper showing the current and revised wording of a statutory change to Section 32b of the Standing Orders of Parish Councils. The notification had been received from the Essex Association of Local Councils. After discussion the Council agreed that the two versions did not read as alternatives and that the purpose of the change was unclear. The Clerk was asked to obtain further information from the EALC.

RESOLVED: that an explanation be sought on the proposed change to Standing Orders and that the matter be considered again at the next meeting.

62 Public Conveniences, Main Road, Danbury

Chelmsford Borough Council had notified the Parish Council of its intention to demolish the public toilets at the end of the current financial year to save money. Information on the cost of cleaning and repairs after vandalism were presented to the Council and the Clerk reported on how other Parishes were dealing with similar decisions by the Borough. In discussion it was agreed that members wished to retain the toilets if possible, and a Working Group led by the Chairman and including Cllrs Allen, Bolwell and Scaife was established to look at costs and options.

RESOLVED: that a Working Group be established consisting of the Chairman of Council (chairman), Cllr Allen, Cllr Bolwell and Cllr Scaife, to consider options for the future of the public toilets.

63 Reports from Committees

In addition to the minutes received, the following reports were made:

63.1 Resources Committee

The July meeting had had to be cancelled due to not being quorate. Parish Council was therefore asked to confirm the list of payments for July 2011 and the Accounts Reconciliation for June 2011. The Chairman had checked the list of payments. Budgetary information was also circulated.

RESOLVED:

- a) that the Payments for July 2011 (Appendix A) and the Reconciliation for June 2011 (Appendix B) be confirmed;
- b) that the Budgetary information be noted;
- c) that the approved signatories be authorised to sign cheques as necessary during August when the Council was in recess.

63.2 Planning Committee

The Danbury Planning Framework SPD had now been published and circulated to all councillors. It would also be available on the Borough Council and the village websites;

The new 'over 55s' apartments at Quinlan Court, Mill Lane, were now being offered for sale;

The planning application for a retail pharmacy at Lee House Surgery had been approved subject to conditions which limited the retail use to a pharmacy only and time-limited the approval to a maximum of 3 years;

A planning application had been received to allow Royal Oak Quarry to continue mineral extraction beyond 31st December 2011;

Essex County Highways were unhappy with the sight-lines for the proposed location of boot fairs on a field near St Cleres Hall and had referred the matter back to Chelmsford Borough Council Planning Enforcement.

63.3 Environment Committee

The Danbury Footpaths Map was being reprinted with minor updates;

The Clerk had advertised for historical information for the 'Discovering Danbury' leaflet. So far the only information received related to the WI;

The Bus Shelter on Maldon Road opposite The Avenue had finally be installed after 16 years of requesting this item.

63.4 Facilities Committee

Further pond clearance at Eves Corner had taken place on 8th July 2011;

Meetings with Danbury Community Association Trust Ltd regarding the Sports & Social Centre were on-going. There would be a report at the next meeting from Stephen Holland regarding the installation of Solar Panels;

The installation of hard standing for the recycling/refuse bins at the Centre had been agreed by Facilities Committee;

The Committee had agreed to look into age-zoning the children's' play area and to carrying out refurbishment;

A number of children's holiday play sessions had been organised on Dawson Memorial Field, two jointly with Chelmsford Borough Council;

Bowling Green: The Graden Scarifier had been booked for October to complete the second year programme of de-thatch on the green. The Bowling Club had given the Council a report completed by the Bowls England Club, following which the Clerk had met with the Green Keeper. Notes from that meeting addressing the issues raised had been forwarded to the Bowling Club.

RESOLVED: that the reports from Committees be noted.

64 Essex Parishes Broadband Implementation Conference

Cllr Kennewell reported that he had attended this conference at Coggeshall on 18th July 2011. It had been an interesting meeting and he had returned with a large folder of information which would be left with the Clerk once he had finished reading it.

RESOLVED: that Cllr Kennewell be thanked for attending the conference and that the information be noted.

65 Queens Diamond Jubilee 2012

Alternative suggestions were requested as it had not proved possible under the Village Green regulations to plant a rose bed at Elm Green. The Chairman suggested adding clocks to the small tower on the roof of the Sports Centre and this was discussed. In a vote members agreed by a majority to take the proposal forward by investigating the work and the costs involved.

RESOLVED: that the possibility of installing clocks on the four faces of the clock tower on the Sports Centre be investigated.

66 Danbury Lakes Forum

A meeting of the Forum had now been arranged for Thursday 1st September 2011 at the Danbury Lakes Country Park.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted.

67 Small Grants Scheme

A letter had been received from the Parochial Church Council of St John Baptist Danbury thanking the Council for the grant for towards maintenance of the churchyard and church green.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted.

68 Village Green Application at the bottom of Pedlars Path

The Council had learned that the application had been dismissed. The Inspector had decided that not enough people were using the land to justify village green status.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted.

69 Official Opening of Parish Office/Children's' Centre

The event went well, with the Mayor and Cllr Hume attending. The Mayor had sent a letter of thanks and congratulations which had been circulated to members. The weather had not been kind, and the formal opening took place inside the building. The ribbon was cut by the winner of the competition to design the Bumblebee logo for the Children's Centre. The Open Morning went well, with many children and families visiting the centre and other members of the public. All visitors had been impressed with the facilities now available.

The staff were formally thanked at the event for their hard work over the last few months and were presented with flowers by the Chairman. The Groundsman was not present, but was formally thanked on the Monday following the opening.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted and that thanks be expressed to all who had contributed to the success of the Opening event.

70 Car Park & Drainage Project

70.1 In accordance with Minute 35 of the Extraordinary Parish Council Meeting held on 13th July 2011 the second stage payment to RM Contracts had been made. There was still some tarmac to be completed at the top car park, and lighting bollards to replace the ones stolen were on order. Further drainage was being installed in the lower car park to try to prevent rain water flooding down the steps. Once these works had been completed there would be a final snagging meeting with representatives of RM Contracts and the Consultant, Brand Leonard.

A further member of the public had hit the height restriction barrier with their vehicle and would have to pay for the repairs through their insurance.

70.2 The Tennis Club would like the Parish Council to extend the 'disabled' path (14 metres) to the patio area behind the Club. The Clerk reminded members that this was always the intention. Maldon Building Services had quoted £1448 plus VAT for the work, and the Tennis Club had agreed to make a donation of £250 towards the cost.

RESOLVED: that the additional works to the path be completed by Maldon Building Services Ltd in the sum of £1448 + VAT.

71 Larger Local Councils Forum

The Clerk attended the June meeting at Leigh-on-Sea where a talk was given by the Chelmsford Group of the CPRE. It was mentioned that villages should have more control over planning applications under the new Localism Bill.

The Data Protection Act was discussed in relation to information held by individual councillors on their home computers. This was being investigated by EALC who were asking further questions of the Information Commissioner. Details would be brought to the next meeting of the Larger Councils' Forum in October 2011.

A presentation was given by the Clerk at Leigh-on-Sea Town Council about its Strand Wharf Project.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted.

72 Changes to ECC's Recycling Centres for Household Waste

Members had received a document from Essex County Council outlining proposed changes which would see some recycling centres close and others have reductions to their opening hours.

RESOLVED: that the Council did not wish to make any comment on the proposals.

73 Article on the Localism Bill

The article *Big People for the Big Society*, taken from the Local Councils' Review Summer 2011 edition, had been circulated to members for information.

RESOLVED: that the article be noted.

74 EALC Annual General Meeting – Tuesday 27th September, Foakes Hall, Dunmow

The Clerk reported that the Danbury Times and annual report would be submitted as entries for the EALC Communication Award and the recently published Danbury Planning Framework for the Localism Award. The village website would automatically be considered for the Website Award.

After discussion, members agreed to nominate Cllr Alan Keeler, Chairman of the Environment Committee, for the Buckingham Palace Garden Party.

RESOLVED: that the Council did not wish to put forward a motion to the AGM and that Cllr Keeler be nominated for a place at a Buckingham Palace Garden Party.

75 Councillors' Surgeries at Farmer's Market

Cllrs Keeler and Court had attended in June and Cllrs Allen and Pemberton in July. Cllr Bolwell would attend in August but Cllr Scaife was no longer available. It was agreed that Cllr Chapman be asked to do August with Cllr Bolwell instead of September as arranged, in which case Cllrs Berlyn and Scaife would attend in September.

RESOLVED: that the Clerk contact members as discussed to ensure that the August and September dates were covered.

76 Library Opening Hours

The revised library opening hours had commenced and were as follows:

Monday and Tuesday closed

Wednesday, 1pm – 5pm

Thursday, 9am – 1pm

Friday, 1pm – 5pm

Saturday, 9am – 1pm

Sunday closed

The Mobile Library still visited Olletts fortnightly.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted.

77 Matters for Report – for information only

It was reported that the latest edition of Bus Passenger News did not include any changes affecting services to Danbury.

Details had been circulated of a forthcoming meeting to assess the need for an Environmental Impact Assessment on land at Lingwood Common which the National Trust had earmarked for deforestation. Interested parties were invited to attend.

RESOLVED: that the reports be noted.

78 Dates of Meetings in 2011

Wednesdays 28th September and 30th November 2011

79 Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED: that, in accordance with S1 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 Public and Press be excluded and that they be instructed to withdraw.

Mr Scott left the meeting at this point.

80 Appointment of Councillor

Members considered the application from Mr John Scott to be co-opted as a member of the Parish Council.

Cllr Bolwell repeated his declaration of interest and did not take part in the vote. A secret ballot was held in which 8 votes were cast in favour and 1 against. The vote was therefore carried.

RESOLVED: that Mr John Scott be co-opted as a member of Danbury Parish Council with immediate effect.

The Clerk would contact Mr Scott to inform him of the Council's decision.

81 Essex Children’s Centres – Update briefing, June 2011

An update on the new commissioning process for children’s services in the County was received.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted.

Business having been concluded, the Chairman closed the meeting at 9.56pm.

Signed: Cllr S Berlyn, Chairman

Date: