

DANBURY PARISH COUNCIL

A Quality Council

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 26th March 2012 at 8.00pm at the Sports & Social Centre, Danbury

Present: Parish Cllrs: S Berlyn (Chairman), M Wood (Vice Chairman), D Bolwell, Mrs A Chapman, Mrs S-J Court, A Keeler, A Pemberton, D Powell, J Thomson, W. Scaife, J Scott, A. Allen and B Kennewell.

County Cllrs N Hume and P Martin; Borough Cllrs C Kingsley, R Shepherd

Representatives of Essex Police and approximately 62 members of the public including representatives of local clubs and organisations.

In attendance: Mrs M Saunders (Parish Clerk), Mrs E Blyth (Assistant Clerk), Mrs M Dyer (Assistant Clerk)

Apologies for absence: Apologies were received from Parish Cllr M Telling, Mrs J Bradbury (RSPB), Cllr I Wright, Mr. P. Stokes (Danbury Outdoor Centre), Danbury & Little Baddow Horticultural Society, Woodham Ferrers & Bicknacre Parish Council and Ms. Liz Wood.

1 Introduction

The Chairman of the Parish Council, Cllr Stuart Berlyn, welcomed all present to the meeting and introduced the guest speaker, Mr Gary Raynor of Essex County Council.

2 Guest Speaker – Mr. Gary Raynor

Mr. Raynor thanked the Parish Council for inviting him to speak and explained that he had come along in his role at ECC as Senior Commissioning Officer, Community Capacity to talk about ‘*Good for Essex - Working together as a Community*’.

Mr. Raynor advised that this initiative had been launched in February 2012 to promote the advantages to health and general wellbeing of both being a volunteer and taking up the services available from the various volunteer based organisations.

Mr. Raynor said he was heartened to see from the large number of volunteers groups promoting their services with displays at this APM that Danbury already subscribes to this positive caring approach to life. The presentation covered how helping others can have a positive effect on the helper – the reduction in mortality associated with volunteering is greater than the reduction associated with physical mobility or exercising, providing positive social interaction to stave off social isolation which is a key contribution factor in admission to residential care. Members of the audience were also encouraged to use the facilities and services offered by volunteer groups. For more information Mr. Raynor invited residents to visit the ‘Good for Essex’ website www.goodforessex.org

3 Question Time for the Speaker

Three questions were put to Mr Raynor:

The first question was: “**Should society encourage people to live an extra 10 years?**” Mr Raynor responded that the object of this element of ‘Good for Essex’ was actually to get people to help each other and the need to change the way support is delivered.

The second point raised was: “**In reality this does not work as people don’t volunteer**”. Mr Raynor responded saying that 20% of Essex people do volunteer, aim is to get this up to 30% - it is a challenge, but looking at Danbury there are lots of activities happening here.

The final question raised related to a letter recently delivered to 40 – 74 year olds in the village offering a **free health check**, the resident wanted to know how this fitted from a resources viewpoint. Mr Raynor replied advising that if a health issue is detected early medical intervention or appropriate help can be provided, which in the long term will result in a cost reduction. The resident then asked why the 74 year upper limit for the health checks. Mr Raynor advised that he thought it was likely to be a financial issue.

Cllr Berlyn reminded the audience that Danbury had a good history of long term volunteer projects citing two groups, firstly the **Village Hall**, celebrating 100 years this year and secondly **First Responders** which will in April, have provided an excellent service in Danbury for 10 years. Cllr Berlyn invited residents to submit any ideas re this subject to the Clerk.

At this point Cllr Berlyn announced a break in the proceedings to thank and make a presentation to **Mrs Elisabeth Blyth** who was retiring from her post as Assistant Clerk after 12 years. Mrs Blyth was presented with a pair of engraved crystal glasses and a bouquet of flowers. Mrs Blyth thanked everyone and said how much she had enjoyed her time working for Danbury Parish Council.

4 Minutes of the 2011 Annual Parish Meeting

Copies of the minutes of the meeting held on 28th March 2011 had been circulated. Mr Norman Bartlett proposed that the minutes be approved. This was seconded by Mrs Christine Sparks and agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 28th March 2011 be approved and signed as a correct record.

5 Chairman’s Report

The Chairman began his annual report by talking about the main activities and achievements of the past year:

- **Car Parks** were finished, there have been some negative comments about the height barriers, but Cllr Berlyn explained that these had been installed to stop large vehicles damaging the surface so that it has as long a life as possible
- Chelmsford Borough Council adopted the **Danbury Planning Framework**, which can be viewed on the Parish Council web site or copies are available from the Parish Office. Cllr Berlyn also advised that CBC also has a plan, one of few districts to have one.
- **Bus Shelter** at The Avenue finally installed after 20 years – a project started by Mrs Caroline Lambert when she was a Parish Cllr.
- **Ponds** at Eves Corner and Runsell Green – maintenance work carried out by Volunteers from BTCV and village residents.
- Free **‘Play in the Park’** sessions for children run in conjunction with Chelmsford Borough Council
- **Tyndalls Farm** Minerals Application – the PC are monitoring, latest draft has been delayed until later in the year.

- Danbury participated in ECC's first **Winter Salt Scheme** which involved recruitment of volunteers to 'spread' the one tonne of salt provided by ECC. The scheme worked very well thanks to Cllr Pemberton and the volunteers he recruited.
- Cllr Berlyn thanked the Clerk, Mrs Margaret Saunders for successfully obtaining £35,000 in **grants** towards the drainage and car park project through the ECC 'Community Initiative Fund' and from Chelmsford Borough Council.
- Cllr Berlyn then went on to thank the Groundsman, Mr Robin Dickens, for his hard work on Dawson Memorial Field resulting in three **awards** from Essex Playing Fields Association.
- The Parish Council also won the Essex Association of Local Council's award for the **best annual report** in Essex last year.
- At this point Cllr Berlyn invited Danbury residents to contact the PC with any ideas re Danbury Times or the Parish web site etc.
- Cllr Berlyn finished this section of his report reporting on the **public toilets**, advising that comments had been invited from Danbury residents re Chelmsford Borough Council's plan to close them, but offering the Parish Council the opportunity to take them on. From the 2,500 homes in Danbury only 8 residents contacted the Parish Office with a view or comment – these were split 50/50 for and against the toilets remaining with the Parish Council taking on responsibility for them. Cllr Berlyn went on to explain that the Parish Council had held meetings with CBC to ascertain what would be involved in taking on the public conveniences and investigated costs: aside from major refurbishment required to bring the building and sanitary ware up to standard, a budget of £5-6,000 would be required annually just to clean, maintain and replenish supplies of soap and toilet tissue etc. The cost to replace the existing toilet block with an automated toilet would be £38,000. Have considered all the elements the Parish Council decided not to take on the toilets and therefore CBC will close them at the end of this month and will then be demolished.

Having covered major works, grants and awards Cllr Berlyn spoke briefly about the Parish Council's plans and ideas for future projects, namely:

- The next phase in the zoning of the **children's play area** with new equipment
- The Danbury **Royal British Legion** branch disbanding and the **building** therefore becoming vacant – to date only a couple of village groups interested in using the building had come forward, but only required ad hoc usage. Costs and feasibility of letting out on this basis were being looked into.
- **Sports & Social Centre - access** to the building being investigated in respect of Members of the Public with mobility problems. (The path to the Tennis and Bowling Clubs had have had a new path installed).

6 Report by the Chairman of the Resources Committee

Cllr Brian Kennewell introduced himself and advised the audience that he had been a Parish Councillor since the last election and Chairman of the Resources Committee since October 2011. Cllr Kennewell then went on to say that the object of his report was to go through the **financial results** for the last financial year which ended on 31st March 2011, advising that these results had been set out in the recent copy of the Danbury Times which had been delivered to all homes in the last couple of weeks.

Cllr Kennewell advised that the Parish Council's main **source of income** is the **annual precept** which is the amount charged to residents as part of the Council Tax bill and that this amounted to £183,000 for the financial year 2010/2011; additionally the Parish Council received **income** from the various assets it owns including the Sports & Social Centre and the playing fields – this provided a total amount of £36,000; plus a **Public Works Loan** of £50,000 to help finance the car parks project started at the end of March 2010 – this loan is to be repaid over the next 10 years.

Expenditure was the next element of the financial results Cllr Kennewell covered advising that for 2010/2011 this was almost £196,000, leaving a surplus which was carried forward to the current financial year.

Cllr Kennewell then went to say that during November the Resources Committee went through its normal **budget setting** process whereby each committee of the Council sets out its plans for the coming year; this resulted in the Resources Committee submitting to the full Parish Council that the **precept** for the 2012/2013 financial year be set at £183,000 – this was accepted by the Council, and will be the third year that the Parish Council had been able to hold the precept at the same level.

Cllr Kennewell concluded his report by quoting from a draft corporate vision recently circulated by Essex County Council which stated: ***“We will never forget that we are stewards of taxpayers’ money”***, advising that whilst in comparison the Parish Council is a very small part of your overall Council tax bill (about 5%), we, as Councillors, are conscious that we are spending your money and in this regard the Clerk and her Staff play a very important role – so I would like to thank them for their help in this regard.

7 Public question time

The Chairman thanked Cllr Kennewell for his report and invited Members of the Public to ask questions or make comments on any village matters of concern. The following questions/comments were raised:

- **Who is responsible for the bus shelters – they are not very clean sometimes?** The Parish Council – they are cleaned twice a month. Residents were asked to contact the Parish Office if they spot any problems.
- **Danbury Parish Council buys goods and services on its own. Does the PC ever join with other Councils to buy in bulk?** The Clerk has liaised with other Clerks and in the majority of cases DPC was buying at better rates so passed on details of DPC suppliers to other Councils. Cost comparison is an ongoing part of the Clerk's role.
- **Traffic – east to west traffic movements 20,000 vehicles per day. Has this gone up in the past 2 years? At the last APM the issue of reducing the speed limit throughout the village to 30 mph was raised.** The PC understands that ECC will be resurrecting the 'Locality Working Parties' and it is hoped that Parish Councils will be part of these. Cllr Allen recalled that traffic numbers reduced after refurbishment of the A414.
- **Medical Centre – an update please.** It is understood that there will be a revised planning application submitted to amend the already approved planning application.

- **Toilets – now that the public conveniences are to be demolished, can the public (plus tourists, cyclists etc.) use the facilities at the Sports & Social Centre?** This is a question that would have to be put to the Centre Manager – the PC cannot answer for the Sports Centre. The PC did consider tourists and cyclists etc. but decided that costs in keeping the toilets open outweighed the benefits of retaining this public facility.

8 Conclusion

The Chairman then thanked everyone for attending and for the Groups who had taken stands at the APM.

The Chairman then formally closed the Annual Parish Meeting at 9.20pm.

Signed: (Chairman)

Date: