

Danbury Parish Council
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 13 March 2024 7.30pm at
Danbury Parish Council Office, The Old School House, Main Road, Danbury, CM3 4NQ

Present: Cllr A Chapman (Chairman), Cllr B Hallett (Vice Chairman), Cllr S Berlyn,
Cllr G Chapman, Cllr M Hessing (ex officio) & Cllr A Keeler

In Attendance: Mrs M Dyer (Assistant Clerk)
Plus, two Members of the Public

23/24.112 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

23/24.113 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.

There were no declarations of interest at this point.

23/24.114 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 Members of the Public present did not wish to raise any matters.

23/24.115 Minutes of the Environment Committee dated 25 January 2024

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Environment Committee meeting held on 25 January 2024 were approved and signed as a true record.

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

23/24.116 Actions

Actions from the minutes were noted.

23/24.117 P3 Group

Members noted that the PRow Officer had delivered Public Footpath signs (single arrow only) to the Parish office plus 2 x hedge shears and 5 x pairs of safety goggles.

Cllr G Chapman updated Members on works carried in 2023 season and the pre 2024 season meeting that took place on Thursday 7 March 2024 with P3 Members, including the discussion that had taken place regarding the appointment of a second footpath officer to join the other Footpath Officer, Cllr G Chapman. Cllr G Chapman then proposed that Mr D. Penry be appointed as the second Footpath Officer, Cllr Hallett seconded the proposal, all Members were in agreement.

RESOLVED: that Mr D. Penry be appointed as the second Footpath Officer

Cllr G Chapman advised the Members that the two Footpath Officers would now survey all the footpaths for proposed works to then be submitted to the ECC PRoW Officer for consideration/approval.

23/24.118 Community Woodland

Members noted that four sessions had been booked with The Conservation Trust (TCV) to undertake work to locate planted trees/shrubs, then installing planting tubes and mulch, for Wednesdays 6th, 13th, 20th and 27th March 2024 at a day rate of £290.00 ex VAT and that that a fifth date of Wednesday 3rd April 2024 was reserved if a further session was required to complete these works; the day rate increases to £350.00 ex VAT from 1st April 2024. TCV will be supplying the planting tubes and stakes FOC.

Cllr G Chapman updated Members on the first two sessions that had taken place, advising that, whilst less TCV volunteers had been able to attend these sessions than had been expected, those present had cleared much of the weeds etc in the Northern section and had at the second session started to prepare 2/3 metre areas around the whips for mulch to be applied at a future session. Cllr G Chapman also advised that in the Southern section where there had been a fire, there were not many whips left and therefore more would need to be planted in the autumn. Due to reduced numbers of volunteers at the first two sessions the TCV had advised that there would be no charge for the fifth session.

Members noted that orders had been placed with the contractor for the works to the fencing and supply of mulch, but due to the inclement weather the ground is too soft for the materials to be delivered/works to be undertaken. Also, clearance of waste can not be undertaken due to ground conditions.

Members were reminded that grants for the woodland e.g., Rural Communities Grant, Awards for All etc. would be applied for when costs for other works within Management Plan have been received.

Members were advised that two bird boxes had now been installed.

23/24.119 Highways Matters

Members noted updates for matters reported to Essex County Council (ECC) Highways. Assistant Clerk to follow up issues as discussed.

Members discussed potential submissions for potholes and footway issues and Cllr Hallett advised that the second pothole reported some time ago via the special ECC Members report service still had not been repaired and that there are issues at Mill Lane/Hyde Lane junction, there are still no road markings at the junction of Cherry Garden Lane/Hyde Lane and no road cleaning/sweeping is ever undertaken on Cherry Garden Lane. Cllr Hallett provided photographs/What3Words etc for Assistant Clerk to report to Cllr Spence/ECC Highways as applicable. Cllr Berlyn also advised road surface issues by the bus stop at the top of Mayes Lane, on the A414 from Medical Centre to Gay Bowers Lane and the crossing outside the medical centre. Cllr Berlyn to provide photographs/What3Words for these issues to be reported.

Members noted that nothing further had been received from the resident re Hyde Lane safety concerns.

Members discussed the parking issues at St John's School/Little Baddow Road and requested that the Assistant Clerk contact the school with a request to write to the parents to park sensibly. The Assistant Clerk briefly outlined 'The School Parking Initiative' from the South Essex Parking Partnership (SEPP).

Members requested Assistant Clerk pursue this with the school.

23/24.120 A414 Review

Members noted that the email to the Transportation Planning and Infrastructure Manager had been forwarded to the three District Cllrs and Little Baddow Council.

Members had been supplied with notes from the online meeting convened by Cllr Spence on 4 March 2024 to discuss the status on proposed works identified in the review and other highways matters.

It was noted a light controlled crossing on the A414 near Well Lane may now be a possibility as land could be released by the school to facilitate the junction box required. Assistant Clerk to liaise with City Cllr Armstrong and the Head Teacher regarding written confirmation for release of the land.

Assistant Clerk advised that a response had now been received from the Transportation Planning and Infrastructure Manager – this was read out to the Members.

Members noted that repainting the white crossing lines and cleaning/upgrading to LED the Belisha Beacons had been agreed, and that the lines had been repainted, but that the lights did not appear to have been cleaned or upgraded.

Members discussed the possible purchase and installation of a Speed Indicator Device (SID), Vehicle Activated Device (VAS) or other signage near Well Lane using Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds. In view of the foregoing, it was agreed that there are five potential schemes to be put forward to the Local Highways Panel:

- LED lights for the existing Belisha Beacons at A414/near junction of Well Lane
- Traffic light-controlled crossing to replace the zebra crossing at A414/near junction of Well Lane
- School signage
- SID (with Danbury Parish Council paying for using CIL money)
- Speed reduction to 30mph on A414 at Runsell Green and Danbury Palace

Assistant Clerk to undertake research/progress as applicable.

23/24.121 Allotments

Member noted that there are now three plots vacant which are being advertised as those on waiting list not able to take up plots at this time; meeting with plot holders still to be arranged.

23/24.122 Ponds

Members noted that a meeting is to be arranged with TCV to ascertain works for both ponds in the summer.

23/24.123 Trees

Members notes that further works had been carried out as a result of storm damage.

23/24/124 Chelmer Valley Landscape Group (CVLG)

Members noted minutes from meeting held on 29 January 2024 and agenda for meeting held on 4 March 2024. No one had been available to attend the meeting on 4 March 2024.

23/24.125 Passenger Transport Travel Essex Bus Services Survey

Member noted that this online survey runs to 17th March 2024.

23/24.126 Revocation of Air Quality Management Areas - Appendix 6

Members noted that Chelmsford City Council had resolved to revoke Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) at The Army and Navy and the A414 Maldon Road Danbury (near The Bakers Arms) as quality at both sites has improved, but that sites would continue to be monitored for any increases. Members questioned this action as data collected towards this decision was during COVID when there was reduced traffic.

23/24.127 Bee Squared

Members discussed this project and were all in agreement that it should be discussed in the autumn for possible implementation in spring 2025.

23/24.128 Blister Packs

Members had been supplied with information to facilitate the recycling of blister packs for possible siting of a collection box in the Leisure Centre. Following lengthy discussion, Cllr Hessing proposed that a large box supplied by Terracycle at a cost of £156.75 ex VAT be trialled in the Leisure Centre and funded from the Parish Council's Chairman's Allowance. Cllr Hallett seconded the proposal, four Members supported the proposal, two Members abstained.

RESOLVED: that a large box supplied by Terracycle at a cost of £156.75 ex VAT be trialled in the Leisure Centre and funded from the Parish Council's Chairman's Allowance.

23/24.129 External Lights at Parish Office and Leisure Centre

Members discussed the external lights at both buildings in terms of them being switched off at night for environmental reasons and the effect it has on wildlife. Members were advised that at present it is not possible for the lights at the Leisure Centre to be turned off for security reasons, as the CCTV system on the exterior of this building is not infra-red so therefore would not be able to record without the external lights being kept on at night. With regards to the lights on the exterior of the Parish Office, information was still awaited from the landlord, ECC via Mitie.

23/24.130 Minerals Consultation Response

Members had been supplied with full details of the consultation and the draft response prepared by the Planning Committee, which will be considered/approved at the Planning meeting on Monday 18th March 2024. Members were advised that if they have any comments to please forward them to the Assistant Clerk for Planning asap.

23/24.131 Matters for Report (for information only)

Cllr Hallett advised that with Cllr Churchouse they had attended the Sustainable Danbury (the Group) meeting held on 20 February 2024 and reported to Members that whilst there was a representative from CCC, there was a vast reduction in the number of residents usually present at these meetings and that the Group would welcome more residents to join. Cllr Hallett advised that the Group would like at some point to hold an event to promote sustainability, with stalls etc and enquired if the Parish Council would be able to assist with such an event, in terms of holding the event at the Leisure Centre and perhaps helping to organise and promote the event, which could also promote Danbury Parish Council's environmental projects, such as the Community Woodland etc. A local retailer has indicated that they are prepared to sponsor the event. As this 'project' also crosses over with 'Community Engagement' it was agreed that it should be included on the agenda for the next Community Engagement Committee meeting on Monday 15th April 2024 and the leader of the Sustainable Engagement Group be invited to speak at this meeting.

Cllr G Chapman reported that there is a new Landlady at The Cricketeers Arms Public House (PH), it is a very popular PH and therefore there are lots of cars in the vicinity causing parking issues and concern re traffic flow and potential accidents; the National Trust car park is usually full. However, Cllr Chapman advised that the Landlady has requested customers be considerate when parking.

Cllr Keeler advised Members that as The Generals Arms, Little Baddow, is no longer a PH (now a restaurant called Olio) more people may go to The Cricketeers for a drink.

Cllr G Chapman also reported that there is now a portacabin/container sited in Church Fields for the utility contractors working nearby.

23/24.132 Matters for Communication

Matters from the meeting for communication to residents: blister pack recycling and the Community Woodland.

23/24.133 Meetings in 2024

Wednesdays: 15 May, 17 July, 11 September and 13 November.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 9.15pm

Signed: Chairman..... Date: