

CODICOTE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE held on Thursday 16th April 2015, in the Parish Council Offices, 107a High Street, Codicote which commenced at 7:00pm

PRESENT: Chair, Councillor Jacque Grant with Councillors Helena Gregory, Ben Knapper, Steve Sanders, Caroline Tinner and John Warwick

IN ATTENDANCE: Lorraine Ellis (Clerk), Janet Reddish (Codicote in Bloom) and John Thurlow (Environment Agency)

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:**

Councillor David Connold (holiday) and Mike Creasey (CEG).

2. **TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE COUNCIL'S CODE OF CONDUCT:**

The Clerk declared an interest in item 6 E003 and will not take part in the discussion.

3. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19th MARCH 2015:**

The minutes of the above meeting were taken as read and duly noted. Councillor Knapper did not send his apologies for the meeting as stated in the minutes.

4. **YELLOW FISH PROJECT:**

The Chair of the meeting welcomed John Thurlow from the Environment Agency to the meeting.

John explained to the Committee that he is a Catchment Co-Ordinator for the Environment Agency and liaises with volunteer groups, Local Authorities and other organisations that link into water framework directives to get the rivers to a good ecological status. Primarily the project is aimed at schools as an educational aid about the general process of what is in your rivers and a general awareness about the drainage system.

John distributed newspaper articles on the Yellow Fish projects which ran in 2013. It is a worthwhile project, an awareness raising campaign showing the difference between the two drainage systems, road drainage goes straight into the water courses and drainage from your house goes in to the sewers which is then treated before going into the water courses. Water quality is very poor and nothing grows apart from sewage fungus.

John agreed to assist the Council with a project if they decided to proceed, having previously approached the school to have a general awareness campaign to try to stop waste such as fats, oil, grease, washing detergents and various other materials going into the drainage system. The Middx & Wildlife Trust are considering a project in Hertford.

Councillor Warwick asked for clarification on what the school would be involved in. John suggested that they could apply Yellow Fish marks on kerbstones as this peaks peoples curiosity, risk assessments have already been worked out and a template is supplied.

Councillor Warwick agreed to take this idea forward with the Codicote Environmental Group and Councillor Gregory agreed to ask the School if they have

any availability in their curriculum. It was suggested that the Scout Group could be approached, they are likely to be interested if they were able to gain a badge. It was also suggested that the Friends of the Mimram be involved, John agreed to follow up on this idea.

Councillor Tinner asked if Hertfordshire Highways is in agreement with the yellow fish being painted on the kerbstones, John indicated that County Councillor Thake does not envisage a problem but it does depend on the type of paint to be used.

The Committee agreed to include space at the Annual Parish Meeting on Thursday 30th April for John to set-up the display and provide banners and general information on the project.

5. **RIVER MIMRAM – FOM – UPDATE:**

Councillor Tinner updated the Committee on a meeting of the Friends of the Mimram she had recently attended with Councillor Grant.

The event had three speakers who represented Affinity Water, Digswell Residents Association and the Friends of the Mimram.

Affinity Water displayed complicated graphs and in April reduced the amount of water extracted at Fulling Mill down to an average 5.6 mega litres per day. The licence is to be revoked in 2018 and they will not be extracting any water. In February it was decided to stop extracting water on a trial basis for a period of time, flooding occurred. Affinity Water are fixing leaks but need consumers to reduce their usage and it is likely that water metres will be made compulsory.

The resident of Fulling Mill House had reported at the meeting that if they were monitoring the situation why was she not consulted because as a result of this change her cellar had flooded.

Affinity Water stated that even if they do not extract any water at all the river will still dry-up as it did in 1997.

The Digswell Residents Association have been able to gain a grant from LaFarge and are working with Welwyn Parish Council (WPC) and Affinity Water as they feel that Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council (WHBC) are not maintaining the river properly as the work is sub-contracted. There is now a river side walk and they are aiming to introduce a nature reserve and also to remove the silt from a pond. It was noted that WPC are wanting to take over the maintenance from WHBC.

Councillor Knapper arrived at this juncture (7:30pm)

Friends of the Mimram are lobbying for the Mimram to be a priority for restoration and promoting the biodiversity action plan 2020. Monitoring of the river flies is being carried out as this is a good indication of the status of the river especially if there is sewage pollution. They are hoping to preserve the public amenity, avoid flooding, monitor water voles, make improvements and cutting back trees to create a wetland reserve and review how the ground water should be managed. Working with the River Lea Catchment Partnership and the Herts & Middx Wildlife Trust and highlighting what happens to the drain in the future.

NHDC have not been involved at all although Fulling Mill is within North Herts and in our Parish and are not part of any of the groups. The Chair indicated that Singlers Marsh is mainly owned by WHBC but there is also private ownership in-between. Councillor Warwick indicated that he thought that WHBC owned the whole area.

John Thurlow left the meeting at this juncture (7:35pm)

6. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES:**

E017 Farriers Close: The Chair of the meeting welcomed Janet Reddish from Codicote in Bloom (CiB) to the meeting.

Thanks are to go to all those individuals and CiB members who helped clear Farriers Close. Janet advised the Committee that CiB have offered to plant the gaps and will work with the Council but they cannot take it on totally. A number of residents have offered to help with the maintenance and watering regime required. Councillor Gregory agreed to spray the weeds. It was noted that Councillors Grant and Sanders had met with County Councillor Thake who has agreed to provide £200 from his HCC Locality Budget.

Janet agreed to prepare a schedule of costings for the plants and spraying. The Clerk to provide a copy of the HCC Locality Budget Scheme application form. The application for funding needs to be applied for by the Council. The Clerk agreed to work with CiB in completing the application.

E002 Highways Streetscape: The Chair reported that she had attended a meeting with Councillor Sanders and County Councillor Richard Thake to discuss various topics. The agenda was circulated to the Committee. It was noted that a meeting will be held with a HHs representative to discuss possible locations for yellow lines at junctions.

E003 Village Street Cleaner: The Committee considered the draft letter to the Village Street Cleaner. It was agreed that the letter was acceptable and should be issued. Councillor Gregory reported that the Recreation Committee would be considering a similar approach to employment for the new Pavilion Cleaner.

Update on Codicote Quarry: The Chair circulated a list of Quarry issues that were discussed at the meeting that was held with County Councillor Richard Thake. The Clerk provided a report of a recent site visit to the Quarry by HCC Enforcement Officers. It was noted that a visit to the Quarry for Committee members is currently being organised.

Anti-social behaviour problems: Nothing to report.

7. **VILLAGE PLANTERS and SIDING BACK:**

E015 The Chair advised the Committee that CiB had offered to help with the maintenance of the three village planters. Councillor Warwick reported that the planters were sponsored by local businesses:-

- Metro Estates - £50 per annum
- Wyevale Garden Centre – plants and compost
- Moules Timber & Landscape – labour

and that the Committee should be made aware of the history of them. As a resident he had paid for their manufacture and installation approximately 16 years ago. Their management is not controlled by the Council and he should have been approached before any changes are made. He stated that he would be happy to work with CiB if they have any availability to provide plants and assist with watering.

The Clerk asked Committee members for their views:-
Councillor Knapper – continue as is with an offer to help
Councillor Sanders – no comment or view
Councillor Gregory – Committee and CiB to contribute with ideas on what plants should be used
Councillor Tinner – All monies to be recorded

Janet Reddish left the meeting at this juncture (8:25pm)

The Chair reported that the grass verge from Codicote to Welwyn had grown over the footpath and should be reported to Hertfordshire Highways. It was noted that CiB had offered to undertake this work but there are health and safety concerns.

8. BENCHES and SEATS – REPAIR and MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME:

E016 It was noted that only one contractor had provided a quotation to the second tender specification. It was therefore agreed not to proceed with the work at this time. The Clerk to thank the contractor for his quotation and advise that the Committee are looking at further options and will contact him in due course.

It was agreed that Councillor Sanders would arrange to visit the family to discuss the bench at the pump and discuss with them possible alternative options for this memorial.

Councillors Sanders and Warwick agreed to carry out a review of all of the benches and seats and report back to the Committee in May. Councillor Knapper offered to assist if required.

9. GRASS VERGE CUTTING:

E017 The Committee reviewed the HCC Agency arrangement document for grass verge cutting. It was noted that the Contractor undertakes a minimum of 6 cuts per year between April – October.

The Clerk to report to HCC that the document states that whilst HCC is happy to honour this long-standing arrangement it needs to formalise it with Codicote PC. CPC already have a written agreement in place. The Clerk to resolve.

10. UPDATE ON THE BURY LANE ALLOTMENTS:

E018 The Clerk reported that a plot holder had indicated concern that there was a major difference between the rental income of the plots against costs such as water supply and grass cutting. It was agreed that no action was necessary as the annual rental of plots is reviewed every year and have been increased again this year.

It was noted that there are 12 whole and 23 half plots with no vacancies, however there is a small waiting list. Councillor Warwick suggested that the Committee consider the possibility of leasing a number of plots from the Garden Centre, the Committee agreed not to take this idea forward at this time.

11. TO CONSIDER VEHICULAR DAMAGE COMPLAINT TO FENCING:

E019 Councillor Warwick updated the Committee on the complaint that has been received from a resident following regular incidents of vehicular damage to his boundary fencing.

It was agreed that the Clerk should write to the resident advising that the Council would do their best to involve the relevant bodies to attempt to resolve the issue by possibly installing bollards.

12. ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE'S OUTSTANDING ITEMS:

E020 It was agreed that Councillor Sanders would liaise with the Clerk to update the schedule. It was noted that Hertfordshire Highways are currently working in Codicote resurfacing Cowards Lane.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

E021 Thursday 21st May 2015 commencing at 7:00pm.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 9:10pm.

Signed..... Chair of Environment

Date..... 2015