

QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

TO THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ON 12th FEBRUARY 2024

Item 8 – Cabinet Portfolio Update – Cabinet Member for a Greener and Safer Chelmsford

Question from Mr K

Question for overview and scrutiny committee:

One of the lovely things about Hoynors is the fact that the children from different families play outside- on their bikes or running around on the grass playing tag etc. This is especially important since many of the gardens are a bit small...or steep!

I did a geographical search on mine and my wife's phones and found the attached photos that give a bit of an idea just how that little grassy area is appreciated by our children throughout the seasons. The photos were a reminder of how lovely it used to be. It really is an important informal play area and I think we should be encouraging children to play outside.

When the children are out playing or just walking to school/shops we don't want to have to worry about them standing on litter or dog mess that is hiding in the undergrowth or the risk of being bitten by ticks from the long grass (and associated lyme disease risk).

Therefore my question is were you aware that this area is used for informal recreation for our children? Will CCC please resume maintenance of this area so our children can use it to play in again?

Question from Mrs K

Land outside XX and XX Maldon Road, Danbury.

The existing rewilding of this site by the Council is failing for a number of reasons:-

The existing grasses and unwanted invasive plants have been allowed to flourish and grow to an exorbitant and unsightly height. This also affects our sight lines when trying to exit our properties. The council's solution of only cutting the grass along the verge just increases how high and unsightly the rest of the area looks and does not address the problems of sight lines.

We purchased our property in February 2020, if the current policy of rewilding was in place at that time we would not have considered purchasing this house due to the unsightly look. We feel that the re-wilding is detrimental to the value of our property and would deter any potential future buyers.

Rubbish gathers in the uncut grass and creates further health and safety issues.

From your own policy there should be a maintenance strategy, what is this and how does it address the frequency of litter picking, assessing sight lines and enriching the biodiversity of this specific area?

Question from Mr T

Why was there no consultation with residents about the maintenance changes to the community-used area in Hoynors, I thought you were supposed to consult the residents?

Instead you have forced us to accept an ugly, messy, untidy, unkempt environment to live in when we all work hard to make our properties neat, tidy and pleasant.

Question from Mrs T

Question for Chelmsford City Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting 12/02/24 at 1900 hours.

37. 38. Hoynors is an 'amenity grassland area' and is in a 'more urbanised location'. Therefore, 'balancing aesthetic and informal recreational use with more natural environmental aspirations' should apply.

- Aesthetics have certainly not been considered – the area becomes very unsightly in the summer and early autumn and certainly cannot be used for 'informal recreation' as it has been for over 40 years. Houses have been bought and sold on the understanding that gatherings could be held there. Indeed the developers of the estate were refused planning permission for two houses on the very area, so that there could be green space for the residents. The CC has now taken this away and the 59 households feel betrayed.

39. 'benefit of less frequent cutting for wildflowers'

- This has not led to plant diversity or enrichment of grassland as head-high cow parsley dominates and, incidentally, is less successful at soaking up carbon emissions (RHS, 2023). Wild life does not need enhancing as there is already plenty in gardens. Again, under this point the Policy says that it considers 'other priorities':- 'informal recreation' and 'where longer grass would cause.....a potential safety hazard'. Well there is certainly risk of fire from uncontrolled tall grass in hot, dry summers. Also, sharp objects and dog waste may be hidden, so that they are not picked up, which could be dangerous.

'After two years of rewilding Hoynors, Danbury, will the City Council now consider cutting the grass at the top of our estate in line with their own policy "for creating and managing species-rich grassland" and its stated aims, under numbers 37 and 38?:

Question from Mr O

Good evening,

Our house sits at the back of the common land bordering the A414. Rubbish and litter from passers by and traffic is a constant problem. The long undergrowth also catches the rubbish from the nearby fish shop and Tesco garage, resulting in an unsightly mess and encourages unwanted rodents.

Allowing the grasses and unwanted invasive plants to grow to an exorbitant height results in an unsightly landscape and a serious fire hazard to our and adjacent properties during dry periods. This was identified and pointed out to us by the Chelmsford Fire Brigade following the fires occurring during 2022.

When limited cutting has been carried out the resultant cuttings have been left uncollected

Nearby fields and forest offer plenty of opportunity for plants and insects to flourish.

Allowing the site to be unattended for long periods is causing considerable stress to the residents bordering the land and results in a blot on the Danbury landscape.

What do the Council intend to do about it.?

Question from Mr W

Why would the Council decide to turn a pleasant glade and pond, as a place of relaxation and exercise, into an unkempt, unattractive scrubland with no wild flowers that becomes a hazard for the public and open to abuse by litterers, dog faeces and arsonists thus changing the aspect of rural attractiveness into a primordial wilderness? I live directly opposite the site in question and applaud our neighbours efforts to preserve a small part of our wonderful natural scenic beauty. Also, given the pond and numerous trees there, is there a specific plan for ensuring that the newts, frogs and snakes are being protected and enabled by the current approach?