

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

**BALDOCK & DISTRICT COMMITTEE
(Baldock, Arbury and Weston and Sandon Wards)**

**Meeting held at the Community Centre, Simpson Drive, Baldock
on 15 January 2007 at 7.30p.m.**

PRESENT: *Councillors M.E. Weeks (Chairman), A.D. Young (Vice-Chairman), S.K. Jarvis, Marilyn Kirkland, I.J. Knighton and M.R.M. Muir.*

IN ATTENDANCE: *Patrick Candler (Head of Community Development & Cultural Services), David Miley (Democratic Services Manager), Julie Williams (Electoral Services Manager), Ros Allwood (Cultural Services Manager), Steve Geach (Parks & Countryside Development Manager), Liz Marten (Principal Conservation Officer), Mark Simmons (Conservation Officer), Richard Tiffin (Area Planning Officer), Stuart Izzard (Senior Community Development Officer (Youth)) and Donna Levett (Committee & Member Services Officer).*

ALSO PRESENT: *Inspector Geoff Camp (Hertfordshire Constabulary) and 2 members of the public.*

82. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

83. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2006 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and signed by the Chairman.

84. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman agreed consideration of the following additional items:

- a) Implementation of an Alcohol-Free Zone for Baldock. This item to be Minuted as Agenda Item 16 but considered following Agenda Item 6 to allow input from Inspector Geoff Camp of the Hertfordshire Constabulary.

85. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations of interests or notification of any party whip directions were made during the meeting.

86. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No items were presented for consideration by the Committee under public participation.

87. COMMUNITY POLICING UPDATE

Inspector Geoff Camp of the Hertfordshire Constabulary made an oral presentation to the Committee providing an update on community policing initiatives in the Baldock & District area.

Inspector Camp started his presentation by providing the Committee with the following statistics, which compared crime rates from 1 April 2006 to 14 January 2007 with the period 1 April 2005 to 14 January 2006:

- All crime – down from 759 to 758 incidents – a drop of 1 incident or 1%
- Violent crime (less serious, inc. common assault) – down from 140 to 129 incidents – a drop of 11 incidents or 8%
- Violent crime (serious, inc. ABH) – down from 61 to 56 incidents – a drop of 5 incidents or 8%
- Dwelling burglaries – down from 51 to 31 incidents – a drop of 20 incidents or 39% - the third largest drop in the Constabulary's area
- Theft of motor vehicles – no change at 12 incidents

- Theft from motor vehicles – down from 49 to 16 incidents – a drop of 33 incidents or 67% - the largest drop in the Constabulary's area
- Criminal damage – up from 246 to 265 incidents – an increase of 19 incidents or 7%.

Inspector Camp confirmed the problems with increased anti-social behaviour and criminal damage that had been experienced in the town and apprised the Committee of the steps that were being taken to address them. These included additional high visibility patrols, contact with parents of young people stopped by police, leafleting areas where there were problems, and working with key stakeholders such as local businesses, schools and the Council to implement additional measures. He stated that the number of incidences had started to reduce as a result of these actions, and that continued work would ensure that the problems were remedied.

Inspector Camp then outlined other areas that his team had been addressing, which included licensing applications and alcohol sales. He apprised the Committee of a recent operation in conjunction with the Hertfordshire Trading Standards to test for underage sales of alcohol, and informed them that none of the premises in Baldock had sold alcohol to the test customers. He also spoke of the success of the town's PubWatch scheme which now had 16 members, working in co-operation on many issues, including New Year opening times and difficult customers.

In response to questions from the Committee, Inspector Camp confirmed that those affected by criminal damage would be visited by a PCSO within 72 hours of reporting the crime, who would provide additional crime prevention advice. This would help to prevent recurrence of the crimes, especially when combined with other measures such as Neighbourhood Watch.

Inspector Camp also acknowledged that many of the young people involved in the recent anti-social behaviour were from outside of Baldock and came to the town to meet with others. He informed the Committee that measures were being taken to address the problems that had arisen, including operating with the British Transport Police to undertake spot checks on those arriving in the town by train to ensure correct tickets and behaviour, and that no underage people were carrying alcohol.

Inspector Camp finished his presentation by paying tribute to PC Tony Sweeney who had recently passed away. PC Sweeney had been a member of the community policing team in the Baldock area for a number of years and provided an excellent, highly valuable service to the community. Inspector Camp spoke of the contribution PC Sweeney had made to the area and the loss that his passing had created.

The Committee added their tributes to that of Inspector Camp, speaking of the caring and dedicated approach to policing that PC Sweeney had adopted, and praising his hard work and dedication to his work.

The Chairman thanked Inspector Camp for addressing the Committee and expressed the Committee's support for the work that the Community Policing team and the Constabulary carried out to address and prevent crime and disorder in North Hertfordshire.

88. POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES

The Democratic Services Manager presented a report of the Returning Officer and Chief Executive to the Committee, which invited them to consider revisions to the polling districts and polling places within the Committee's area following the boundary review for North Hertfordshire.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Democratic Services Manager confirmed that the changes to the polling districts did not apply to the County Divisions, and it would therefore be necessary to ensure a mechanism was in place to facilitate running a County Council and District Council election simultaneously should the need arise.

Following identification of some inconsistencies in the maps for the polling districts in the Weston & Sandon Wards, the Democratic Services Manager suggested that the Committee

agree to allow resolution of such issues under delegated authority, rather than having to return to the Committee for authorisation of all changes.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the establishment of polling districts as described in Appendix A be agreed;
- (2) That the definition of polling places within the area of the Committee in such a way that they are coterminous with the polling districts be agreed;
- (3) That any inconsistencies between the address lists and maps for polling districts and polling places, as appended to the report, be dealt with by the Returning Officer under power delegated by this Committee, in consultation with the Ward Councillor(s).

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Council to review the Authority's polling districts in light of the District of North Hertfordshire (Electoral Changes) Order 2006.

89. AREA GOVERNANCE AND THE COST OF DEMOCRACY BUDGET SAVINGS 2006/2007

The Head of Community Development & Cultural Services presented a joint report of the Heads of Community Development & Cultural Services, Planning & Building Control and Legal & Democratic Services to the Committee that set out a series of proposals and options to determine savings which could be made if the Council's approach to its governance and decision making arrangements was restructured. The Head of Community Development and Cultural Services confirmed that this report was being brought to the Committee as a direct response to implementing the Council's decision to make savings of £50,000 which was part of the Service and Financial Planning Process for 2006/2007.

The report had been presented to Cabinet at its meeting to be held on 19 December 2006, and the Head of Community Development & Cultural Services had tabled a copy of the resolutions that the Cabinet had made at that meeting, which were as follows:

“RESOLVED:

- (1) *That the principles of the key proposals in the report, as set out in Section 4 be agreed;*
- (2) *That Options 1 and 2, with regard to the establishment of a central Development Control Committee and a reduction of Area Committees, be investigated further;*
- (3) *That the Area Committees be consulted on the finer details of the report and its implications, and that an all Member Workshop be arranged in the New Year to allow Members to meet collectively to consider further the key proposals contained in the report;*
- (4) *That a greater delegation of responsibilities to Cabinet Portfolio Holders be considered by the Leader of the Council;*
- (5) *That the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be requested to prepare a report on the Constitutional implications of the proposed changes set out in the report;*
- (6) *That a further report on the detailed proposals and timescales for implementation be submitted with recommendations to Cabinet on 27 February 2007 and Council on 1 March 2007;*
- (7) *That the further report referred to in (6) above considers the effect of the options relating to a reduction in Area Committees on the work of the Community Development Officers;*
- (8) *That officers report on the potential efficiency savings which may accrue, other than those already identified in the report, should the key proposals be agreed.”*

The Head of Community Development & Cultural Services acknowledged that the proposals represented a fundamental change to the way that the Council's civic process currently operates, but stated that the resulting arrangements would be more streamlined and less bureaucratic, whilst operating within the law. He also informed the Committee that the report before them presented only the outline proposals and principles, and that a further report with

more detailed information about the proposals would be presented to Cabinet at a later meeting.

Councillor S.K. Jarvis expressed the view that the proposals would not resolve the expenditure problems experienced in this area as the majority of the expenses were overhead costs, and felt that it was wrong to reduce Councillor input into the democratic processes. He spoke in support of the key role that Community Development Officers played in the District, and the value that residents placed on the determination of planning applications by their local Councillors, who had the local knowledge required to make the appropriate decisions. He therefore **PROPOSED** the following alternative resolution:

“That the Baldock & District Committee finds no merit in the proposals contained in the joint report of the Heads of Community Development & Cultural Services, Planning & Building Control and Legal & Democratic Services, other than the proposal to reduce the number of Cabinet meetings.”

Councillor Marilyn Kirkland **SECONDED** this motion, but on putting it to the vote two Members of the Committee voted in favour of the motion and four Members voted against it so the motion was lost.

Other Committee Members supported the key role of the Community Development Officers, but expressed the view that centralisation of the determination of planning applications would ensure more consistency of decision making and allow more community involvement in the process by those Councillors not on the Committee. It was also suggested that this could result in less decisions being overturned at appeal, and subsequently less costs for the Council to pay.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report of the Heads of Community Development & Cultural Services, Planning & Building Control and Legal & Democratic Services be noted;
- (2) That the following key issues raised and comments made by the Baldock & District Committee be taken into account by Cabinet when considering the recommendations in the report:
 - A key expenditure area for review and reduction is the level of overheads identified in the Cost of Democracy Budget, as these comprised the majority of that budget.
 - The proposed 27% reduction in the number meetings as a result of the changes in composition and frequency of meetings of Committees would only result in a poor 4% reduction in expenditure.
 - The work of the Community Development Officers had one of the biggest impacts in the District and had been identified on many occasions as exceptional, so it would be highly undesirable to remove this key service to save what amounted to a small sum of money.
 - Centralisation of planning was not required for meeting application determination targets as this was already happening under existing arrangements.
 - The proposal for combining the Baldock & District and Royston & District Committees would be unworkable as the two areas had no common interests or characteristics. Better consideration should be made when deciding which Wards to combine when reducing the number of Area Committees to ensure that proper consideration was made of such issues.
 - That the principles of the key proposals of the report as set out in Section 4 be supported.
 - That the reduction in the number of Area Committees from 5 to 4 be supported, although not with the combination of the Baldock & District and Royston & District Committees.
 - That greater delegation of responsibilities to Portfolio Holders be supported, subject to public information and scrutiny arrangements.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) To provide the Baldock & District Committee with an opportunity to provide its views on the proposed changes to the Area Governance and decision making arrangements.
- (2) To ensure that savings identified within the context of the Service & Financial Planning process for 2006/2007 and beyond were achieved.

90. AN ARTS, MUSEUMS & HERITAGE STRATEGY FOR NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE

The Cultural Services Manager presented a report of the Head of Community Development & Cultural Services to the Committee which informed the Committee of the development of an Arts, Museums & Heritage Strategy for North Hertfordshire and invited comment on the draft Strategy prior to its final consideration by Cabinet at its meeting on 27 March 2007 and Council at its meeting on 29 March 2007. The draft Strategy was attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Cultural Services Manager informed the Committee that the Strategy needed to include consideration of the London 2012 Olympics as this was required for all funding applications. It was also important to remember that, whilst it was unlikely that any primary activity for the event would be located in North Hertfordshire, the general increase in sporting activity and number of tourists likely to be staying in the region as a result of the events would have an impact on the District's facilities.

The Committee also noted that one project proposed to be actioned as a result of the work undertaken in formulating the Strategy was the establishment of a North Herts Museums Network and the production of a leaflet with details of all seven of the Museums in North Hertfordshire.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report of the Head of Community Development & Cultural Services be noted;
- (2) That the following key issues raised and comments made by the Baldock & District Committee be incorporated into the final report to be considered by Cabinet and Council at their respective meetings in March 2007:
 - That the establishment of a North Herts Museums Network be supported as a forum for partnership working throughout the District, including the opportunities to improve and enhance the school loans scheme.
 - That the Council seek to use the London 2012 Olympics as an opportunity for development in the Arts, Museums & Heritage services in North Hertfordshire through the Strategy.
 - That the production of a leaflet with details of all seven of the Museums in North Hertfordshire be supported and that such leaflets be distributed to local hotels, tourist information centres and other information points in the District.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To ensure that a wide consultation was undertaken on the Art, Museums and Heritage Strategy.

91. HIGHWAY VERGE ASSESSMENT FOR NORTH HERTS HIGHWAYS PARTNERSHIP JOINT MEMBER PANEL

The Parks & Countryside Development Manager presented a joint report of the Head of Leisure & Environmental Services, Head of Planning & Building Control and Head of Housing & Environmental Health which sought the Committee's views on the physical damage to highway verges within the Baldock & District area as set out in Appendix A to the report. The Committee's preferred schemes would be reported to the meeting of the North Hertfordshire Highways Partnership Joint Member Panel (NHHP JMP) to be held on 29 January 2007.

The Committee discussed those areas identified in the appendix to the report, and expressed their concern that there would be a low likelihood of the works being implemented due to the high costs. The Committee also felt that the omission of roads in rural areas was unfair as there were several roads in the residential settlements in those areas which could also benefit from repair works to their highway verges.

The Parks & Countryside Development Manager informed the Committee that the restriction of the appendix to the urban areas of the District had resulted from its preparation by the Council's grounds maintenance contractors, who only worked in those areas. He confirmed that the remedial works would be implemented from the Highways Partnership's budgets as allocated for such work, and that the Committee were invited to identify any new schemes and/or priority schemes in their area to enable the Partnership to allocate their funds accordingly.

The Committee also discussed the works previously carried out at the junction of Norton Road and Pond Lane, Baldock. This verge had previously been destroyed by vehicle parking, and work to resolve the problem had taken the form of installation of bollards. Whilst this met Hertfordshire County Council's requirements for meeting safety targets, and would eventually allow the verge to reform naturally, the Committee felt that the verge still looked unsightly and further works to restore it were required. The Parks & Countryside Development Manager suggested that the Committee request that the cost of such works be determined, to allow the Committee to make a decision as to the best way of progressing these works, but confirmed that additional funds for these works would not be available from the Council's grounds maintenance budget.

RESOLVED: That the joint report of the Head of Leisure & Environmental Services, the Head of Planning & Building Control and the Head of Housing & Environmental Health, including the contents of Appendix A applicable to Baldock, be noted.

RECOMMENDED TO THE NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE HIGHWAYS PARTNERSHIP JOINT MEMBER PANEL: That the following comments from the Committee be considered when assessing the highway verge problem schemes applicable to the Baldock & District area:

- That consideration of those highway verges in the residential settlements of rural areas should also be assessed to establish the need for remedial works.
- That an assessment should be made of the existing problems in the Nightingale Way / Clare Crescent / Mons Avenue area of Baldock to determine the most appropriate action(s) to be taken to remedy the parking difficulties in the area and restore the highway verges where possible.
- That the restoration of highway verges in Clothall Road, Baldock be identified as the priority scheme for Baldock, in light of the location's role as a key access point to the town. This work should address both the problems caused by parking associated with the school and that caused by drivers parking further along the road, who utilise the now redundant dropped kerb.
- That the restoration of highway verges in London Road, Baldock be identified as the second priority scheme for Baldock. This main access road into the town required remedial work in several location, but it was felt that the area around Page Close should be completed first, then that around Templar Avenue.
- That the restoration of highway verges due to the damage caused by vehicles in Frances Road, Hinxworth and Mill Lane, Weston be identified as priority schemes in the rural areas, identification and costing of the appropriate remedial solutions to be confirmed by Highways.
- That Hertfordshire Highways be requested to provide details of the costs for remedial works to reinstate the grass verge by resoiling and returfing works at the junction of Norton Road and Pond Lane, Baldock, in order that the Committee could consider allocation of delegated funds to finance such works.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To ensure that the highway verge problem schemes identified by the Area Committee were considered for inclusion in the JMP Work Programme for reinstatement in 2007/2008.

92. CHAMPION NEWS

The Senior Community Development Officer (Youth) presented a report of the Head of Community Development & Cultural Services to the Committee, which advised them of the activities undertaken by the Senior Community Development Officer (Youth) since the meeting of the Committee held on 4 December 2006, and brought to their attention some important community based activities that would be taking place during the next few months.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report of the Head of Community Development & Cultural Services be noted;
- (2) That the actions taken by the Senior Community Development Officer (Youth) to promote greater community capacity and well-being for communities in the Baldock & District area be endorsed.

REASON FOR DECISION: To keep Members of the Committee apprised of the latest developments in community activities in the Baldock & District area.

93. BALDOCK & DISTRICT AREA COMMITTEE DEVELOPMENT & AREA VISIONING BUDGETS 2006/2007

The Senior Community Development Officer (Youth) presented a report of the Head of Community Development & Cultural Services to the Committee, which set out the budgetary situation for the Committee, together with one additional grant application that had been received.

The Senior Community Development Officer (Youth) also reminded the Committee that the balance of the budgets would need to be allocated by the end of the financial year 2006/2007, and encouraged them to bring forward projects from their Wards which could benefit from those funds.

RESOLVED: That the current expenditure and balance of the Development Budget be noted.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

- (1) The report was intended to apprise Members of the financial resources available to this Committee. It drew attention to the current budgetary situation, assisted in the effective financial management of the Committee's budget and ensured actions were performed within the Authority's Financial Regulations and the guidance contained in the Grants procedure;
- (2) The awarding of financial assistance to voluntary organisations and the use of discretionary spending allows the Committee to further the aims and strategic priorities of the Council.

94. GRANT APPLICATION – LETCHWORTH & BALDOCK BRIDGE CLUB

The Senior Community Development Officer (Youth) drew the Committee's attention to the grant application from the Letchworth & Baldock Bridge Club. The Club was requesting the sum of £635 to enable the Club to make its service more attractive to new members and so increase membership. However, the officer recommendation was for no award on this occasion as the application was predominantly for rent and running costs, which was not permitted under the grant criteria.

Whilst the Committee acknowledged that the nature of the Club made it unlikely that they would undertake any other form of events to raise money, and supported the important social contact role it played in some of its members' lives, it was agreed that it would be inappropriate to grant funds to pay the Club's running costs.

RESOLVED: That no funds be awarded to the Letchworth & Baldock Bridge Club on this occasion due to the inappropriate nature of the application.

REASON FOR DECISION: The awarding of financial assistance to voluntary organisations and the use of discretionary spending allows the Committee to further the aims and strategic priorities of the Council.

95. NEWNHAM CONSERVATION AREA REVIEW

The Principal Conservation Officer presented a report of the Head of Planning & Building Control to the Committee which sought the Committee's support for the documents proposed

to be used for a 6-week consultation period commencing on 27 January 2007 to be approved by Cabinet.

These documents, to be presented to Cabinet for approval at its meeting to be held on 16 January 2007, were appended to the report and consisted of:

- Appendix 1 – Newnham Conservation Area Review – Draft January 2007 (part 1 of 3);
- Appendix 2 – Review Background Paper – Draft January 2007 (part 2 of 3);
- Appendix 3 - Register of Buildings of Local Interest – Draft January 2007 (part 3 of 3);
- Appendix 4 – Newnham Conservation Area – Proposed Boundary Changes (Jan 2007); and
- Appendix 5 – Questionnaire.

The Principal Conservation Officer confirmed that, whilst all five documents would be used during the consultation process, only those documents at Appendices 1 to 3 would form the final policy documents. She stressed that one of the key aims of the review process was to ensure that the policy documents presented an up-to-date benchmark of the character, appearance and setting of the Newnham Conservation Area.

The Committee expressed some concern at the Parish Council's dissatisfaction with the level of consultation and discussion that had taken place prior to the production of the consultation documents and the arrangement of the consultation process. The Committee emphasised the role that the Parish Councils played in rural areas and the need to ensure that they were kept informed of any such reviews at all stages, especially in view of the sensitive nature of such issues in those areas.

In response to further questions from the Committee, the Conservation Officer confirmed that the public consultation would be launched by an exhibition at the Newnham Village Hall but, in light of the nature of the village, it had not been possible for there to be a fixed exhibition for the duration of the consultation period. Instead, every houses in the Parish would be receiving a copy of the documents by hand delivery two days prior to the launch, the documents would be available on the Council's website and at the offices in Letchworth Garden City, and it was anticipated that an additional exhibition would be held in the Newnham Village Hall in February 2007. These measures would allow all those affected by the changes the opportunity to provide feedback into the consultation process.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report of the Head of Planning & Building Control be noted;
- (2) That the format and processes for the public consultation period for the review of the Newnham Conservation Area be agreed;
- (3) That, at the conclusion of the public consultation period on 9 March 2007, any further amendments to the Newnham Conservation Area policy documents should be discussed with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman on behalf of this Committee to agree a recommendation to the meeting of Cabinet to be held on 27 March 2007.
- (4) That the need to work more closely with Parish Councils when conducting Conservation Area Reviews in rural areas be stressed to officers and adopted into working practices to ensure close and successful working relationships at all levels.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) To ensure that the Council's statutory duties are carried out and that targets set out by the Council with respect to BV 219 are satisfied.
- (2) To enable the Council to adopt a Register of Buildings of Local Interest and an up-to-date review of the Newnham Conservation Area with appropriate documents to inform future planning decisions.

- (3) To enable the Newnham Conservation Area Review to be approved for Development Control purposes before April 2007, thus meeting the Council's BVPI target for 2006-2007.

96. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

RESOLVED: To determine the application as set out in the report of the Head of Planning and Building Control as submitted to the Committee in the following schedule:

SCHEDULE

Reference Number	Description of Development and location	Decision
06/02539/1HH	103 High Street, Ashwell, SG7 5NT Single storey rear extension with balcony and front porch infill. Insertion of dormer windows in front roof elevation (as amended by drawing no. BP/06/10/L2a received 11/12/2006 and drawing no. BP/06/10/L1a received 19/12/2006)	GRANTED (as per report)

97. PLANNING APPEALS & ENFORCEMENT

The Area Planning Officer informed the Committee that the following planning appeal had been lodged since the meeting of the Committee held on 4 December 2006:

Appellant	Mr J Saxon
Reference number	06/2078/1
Address	Land rear of the Cottages, High Street, Hinxworth
Proposal	Outline planning application for erection of detached dwelling with detached double garage
Method	Written representations

The Area Planning Officer informed the Committee that the following appeals had been determined since that meeting:

Appellant	QUBE Planning Ltd
Reference number	06/00850/1HH and 06/00842/1LB
Address	Westbury Farmhouse
Proposal	Single storey garden room
Decision	Appeal ALLOWED

The Area Planning Officer informed the Committee that there a planning enforcement issue had arisen in Radwell. He explained that caravans / mobile homes had been parked at the site on several occasions and that allegations had been made of people living at the site, for which no planning permission had been granted. When the owner of the land had been approached about this issue he had assured officers that a planning application for this use of the land was to be submitted to the Council, but that application had not been forthcoming. The Council's Planning Enforcement Officer had therefore served a Planning Contravention Notice on the owner in order to establish the nature of the current use.

The Area Planning Officer confirmed that he would provide the Committee with a further update on this matter at a future meeting.

98. IMPLEMENTATION OF AN ALCOHOL-FREE ZONE FOR BALDOCK

Reason for urgency: The need to address increasing problems with criminal damage and anti-social behaviour in Baldock due to alcohol consumption.

The Chairman had agreed consideration of this additional item at the request of Councillor M.R.M. Muir, who expressed the concerns of many residents about the increasing problems of anti-social behaviour and criminal damage in the town. It was felt that these problems were

being fuelled by the consumption of alcohol and that steps therefore needed to be taken to address this.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Inspector Geoff Camp of Hertfordshire Constabulary explained that an alcohol-free zone did not immediately make it illegal to possess or drink alcohol within that zone, but that it only did so if a police officer or PCSO had asked the person concerned to stop doing so. He gave a brief outline of some of the benefits and drawbacks of implementing the zones, and stressed that it would be unlikely that the zone could be applied to the whole town, so careful consideration would need to be made of the areas to be designated as part of the zone and the potential impact and dispersal issues that could arise.

In response to questions from the Committee, Inspector Camp stated that the main problems with drunken behaviour in Royston, where an alcohol-free zone had been implemented, had arisen from underage drinking. This was an issue which the police already had the power to deal with, including the seizure of alcohol from offenders, and was regularly used in Baldock as well. He explained that alcohol-free zones were aimed more at addressing drunken behaviour in adults and stated that, whilst there had been a dramatic reduction in violent crime in Royston over the last 6 months, this could not be linked directly to the implementation of the alcohol-free zone and was likely to be the result of a combination of many initiatives targetting such behaviour.

In light of the information before them and the need to ensure they made an informed decision, the Committee felt it would be appropriate to request that a report be brought before them to clearly set out the benefits, drawbacks and implications of implementing an alcohol-free zone in Baldock, together with the processes that would need to be undertaken.

RESOLVED: That officers be requested to provide a report outlining the implications of implementing an alcohol-free zone in Baldock to the meeting of the Committee to be held on 2 April 2007.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure that measures were taken to address the problems of anti-social behaviour and criminal damage in Baldock that were the result of drunkenness.

The meeting closed at 10.34 p.m.

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Chairman