

**NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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

**Meeting held in the Baldock Community Centre, Simpson Drive, Baldock  
on 2 June 2008 at 7.30 p.m.**

**MINUTES**

**PRESENT:** *Councillors M.R.M. Muir (Chairman), I.J. Knighton (Vice Chairman),  
Marilyn Kirkland and S.K. Jarvis.*

**IN ATTENDANCE:** *Barrie Jones (Head of Financial Services)  
Claire Morgan (Community Development Officer)  
Susanne Gow (Committee and Member Services Officer).*

**ALSO PRESENT:** *Mrs Joan Garrett  
7 members of the public*

**4. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending. He reminded Members that any declarations of interest in respect of any business set out in the agenda, should be declared as either a prejudicial or personal interest, and they were required to notify the Chairman of the nature of any interest declared at the commencement of the relevant item on the agenda. Members declaring a prejudicial interest were to leave the room and not seek to influence the decision during that particular item.

**5. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs M. Weeks and A.D. Young.

**6. MINUTES – 17 MARCH AND 15 MAY 2008**

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meetings held on 17 March 2008 and 15 May (the latter to appoint a new Chairman and Vice Chairman) be approved as true records of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

**7. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no notification of any other business to this Committee Meeting.

**8. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

A petition was presented by Mrs Joan Garrett, regarding provision of bus services for the Clothall estate. She also read out a statement on behalf of the older citizens of Baldock, calling for improvements to the 90/91/94 bus service provision in Baldock, as this has just been shortened to cut Baldock off the route, while introducing a new bus service between Royston and Letchworth although there is already a satisfactory rail link between both towns. The depleted bus service has meant that there is a curtailed service to Clothall Common, which is too long a walk for the elderly, infirm and young mothers with pushchairs and/or toddlers living on Clothall Common to reach Baldock High Street and the shops.

The Baldock and District Committee were asked if they could bring pressure to bear in obtaining a more workable service which met the needs of the community, including the residents of Clothall Common, so that Letchworth, Hitchin and Stevenage were more conveniently accessible for the Baldock and Clothall Common residents.

The provision of a bus stop in Clothall Road was also requested.

The Chairman stated that on this occasion the Committee would discuss this matter, and pass on their views to the Transport Policy Officer.

On the comment being made that answers to the questions raised were required from Hertfordshire County Council, the Chairman replied that he had informed the NHDC Transport Policy Officer of the petition, and on behalf of Baldock and District Committee had contacted Herts County Council. He revealed that Arriva had decided to focus on the most commercial routes, and withdraw those not as commercially viable, and this had caused the problem. The Transport Policy Officer had been asked to instigate talks regarding the provision of two bus stops on Clothall Road, one to take the form of a flag on a lamp post and another with a shelter.

The Transport Policy Officer had reported that following discussions, the bus stop issue had now been resolved. He would report back to the Baldock and District Committee at their next meeting on 21 July 2008.

The Chairman wished to thank Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Highways for their decision as reported by the Transport Policy Officer, and would like to support the request for a bus stop in Clothall Road to be provided with a shelter for the elderly.

Members agreed that despite the successful lobbying with Hertfordshire County Council, further discussions are vital, as the bus routes put in place do not serve the needs of the community.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Garrett for her comments and for presenting the petition, bringing this matter to the attention of the Committee.

**9. PRESENTATION ON BEHALF OF FRIENDS OF BALDOCK GREENSPACES**

Mr Dieter Iwan of the Countryside Management Services was due to give a presentation on behalf of Friends of Baldock Greenspaces, but due to unforeseen circumstances was unable to attend the meeting. The Committee agreed that this presentation should be deferred until a member of the Countryside Management Service was able to attend a Baldock and District Committee Meeting at a future date to address the Committee on behalf of the Friends of Baldock Greenspaces.

**10. BALDOCK TOWN HALL TEMPORARY REFURBISHMENT**

The Head of Financial Services submitted a report to the Baldock and District Committee, laying out the options available for the refurbishment and seeking Members' views on these options.

The result of a feasibility study carried out by architectural firm Widdup/Amer showed that of the two options resulting, Option 1 relating to the preparation of a business case for Baldock Town Hall to be used as a community facility or a theatre and arts centre was the only one of interest.

The building was deemed a health and safety risk following a fire risk assessment, and only the Baldock Museum Society currently use the building – all other groups who formerly used the Town Hall have been accommodated elsewhere.

The Head of Financial Services reported that the Independent Stakeholder Group were very keen to use the building for the Baldock Festival, and to develop their business case for Baldock Town Hall to be used as a community facility. The work to be carried out to achieve this would, it was suggested, also provide improvements and decoration and therefore would attract other users. This would, however, mean that because of the work required to bring the interior of the building up to a reasonable standard, a two-year extension was needed, with funding of up to £50,000 to ensure that essential compliance works, additional community use and redecoration were included.

The Head of Financial Services asked the Baldock and District Committee to consider the options to be put to Cabinet. The Chairman wanted to know how soon after the decision was made work would start on Baldock Town Hall, and was told that the detailed plans and tender process would probably take 2 to 3 months: it was hoped to bring the building back into community use by September/October 2008. The Head of Financial Services explained that the building was safer when it was used as offices in

the past due to the presence of more people, and was more at risk now, with less frequent use. It was confirmed that the building was structurally sound and the work would be internal only – mainly redecoration and opening up a large area downstairs which can be used by the Independent Stakeholder Group and other community groups.

One Committee Member made the point that it was essential that all work undertaken must be done properly for a long-term future – not “quick fixes” which would then fail later on and the Committee agreed with this observation .

The Chairman thanked the Head of Financial Services and his staff for their assistance, and suggested that this project was referred to Cabinet so that it is a positive way forward for the Baldock community. The Baldock and District Committee recommended funding in the sum of £50,000 for the work necessary to refurbish Baldock Town Hall.

**RESOLVED:**

- a) That the Baldock and District Committee notes the content of the report and considers that the level of capital investment it wishes carried out to Baldock Town Hall is £50,000;
- b) That the Baldock and District Committee agree that the Baldock Town Hall Independent Stakeholder Group is allowed shared use of Baldock Town Hall to further develop their business case.

**REFERRED TO CABINET:** That the sum of £50,000 be agreed as the level of capital expenditure required to carry out the temporary refurbishment works to Baldock Town Hall and that the Capital Programme 2008/2009 be revised accordingly.

**REASON FOR DECISIONS:**

To allow continuing community use and to meet the aims of the adopted Baldock Town Centre Strategy, and in doing so contribute towards achieving the Council's strategic objectives.

**11. CHAMPION NEWS**

The Community Development Officer (CDO) for Baldock and District introduced the report of activities that had taken place since the last meeting on 17 March 2008.

The Tene CCTV Coverage

North Herts Homes and the local police proposed that siting a mobile CCTV outside the Sheltered Housing Scheme in the Tene would assist with long-term community safety, as this area has historically been a hot spot for antisocial behaviour. It was believed that a camera covering the area would prove to be a deterrent to illegal or antisocial activities.

Clothall Village Hall

Site clearance began with the removal of trees and shrubs and the disconnection and removal of the EDF electricity supply pole.

The next stage of the project will consist of the demolition of the old village hall, and the removal of a substantial amount of top soil to level the site ready for the construction of the new village hall.

It was hoped that instead of transporting this excess quality top soil to the landfill, it could be used to help construct a series of mound banks between the rows of graves in Wilbury Cemetery, to reduce wind erosion at the site, saving on landfill charges and being a much “greener” option.

#### North Herts Big F A B Event

The 50+ Development Officer in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC)'s 'Wellbeing for Over Fifties' project group, is coordinating the largest event to date in the district aimed at people between 55 and 70. It is seen as a pilot event by HCC and if successful similar events will be rolled out county-wide,

People from across the district will be invited to attend a community engagement exercise called 'Talking About My Generation' on Saturday 14 June 2008 at the Spirella Building in Letchworth. In conjunction with this, the Big F A B (Fifty and Above) Event will take the form of an information fair, with a free prize draw, health checks, complementary therapies, stalls provided by local community groups and organisations, and tours of the public areas of the Spirella building.

The 'F A B Development Plan – 2009 to 2012' will be drawn up using information gained from the community engagement process, to look at what activities and services will be needed by the new generation of retired people in North Herts.

The Community Development Officer agreed, when asked by the Chairman, to do a presentation on the Xerscape equipment (exercise equipment for all ages sited in parks and open spaces) for the Baldock and District Committee, so that it can consider its provision for the residents of Baldock and District.

#### Knights Templar Music Project with the City of London Sinfonia

In April 2008, 30 GCSE Music students from Knights Templar, Hitchin Boys and Hitchin Girls Schools took part in three composition workshops led by the composer John Cooney and run by musicians from the City of London Sinfonia (CLS).

As part of the musical programme by the CLS, the students performed their compositions to a sell-out audience at a concert held on Friday 18 April 2008 at Knights Templar School.

Due to the success of this scheme, it is suggested that more schools are invited to participate, perhaps even involving primary schools.

#### Bypass Landscaping – Old Wallington Road

The Countryside Management Service will be constructing the two ditch board bridges, providing access from the Clothall Common estate directly onto the footpath, and this work will take place in the summer between June and the end of August. As soon as the money is transferred, work can start on this project.

Fencing at the entrance to the path will be softened by planting, to be done on Saturday 22 November 2008.

#### Service Level Agreements (SLAs)

A review of the North Herts District Council's Policies and Procedures for Financial Assistance to the Voluntary and Community Sector, including arrangements for SLAs and general grants awarded by Area Committees, is currently under way. A report is scheduled to go to Cabinet in the near future.

### Baldock Town Centre Enhancement Public Information Events

Public information on the Baldock Town Centre Enhancement Scheme is provided by way of two events. The first event was an information stall at the Baldock Fair on 17 May 2008, when Committee Members engaged with the public on a wide range of issues and successfully answered questions put to them.

The second event will take place on 3 June 2008 at the Zeus Restaurant on Baldock High Street from 5.30pm to 8.30pm, when residents can speak to the planners.

Officers from North Herts District Council's Planning Department, design consultants BDP, officers from Hertfordshire Highways and representatives from appointed contractors Skanska McNicholas will attend both events.

The Chairman asked the CDO to come back to the Baldock and District Committee at the next Committee Meeting on 21 July 2008 and each Committee thereafter, to keep the Committee up-to-date with the progress of the Baldock Town Centre Enhancement Scheme.

### Ashwell Cycle Club

The Cycle Club's bid for the 'Awards for All' Lottery Fund was successful, and they have been awarded a grant of £7,530. This funding, together with that provided by the Arbury Ward Discretionary Development Budget, will be used to provide equipment to specifically attract young people into the sport by way of the Grass Track Racing evenings planned for this summer.

The Cycle Club also aims to develop a core membership of 30 to 40 young people aged between 9 and 18 years. One section of the Club has been set up to concentrate on youth development and a youth racing team.

The Club has also recently been offered 7.5 acres of land in Ashwell, to develop a permanent all-weather and grass track facility.

### Baldock Festival

2008 is the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Baldock Festival. Although a formal review of the two-week long Festival was not available by the time of writing her report, the Community Development Officer stated that she had seen evidence of the great success of all events, the majority of them being either fully booked or over-subscribed.

As usual, the Medieval Street Fayre concluded the festivities on 17 May 2008, and due to advance preparations, the High Street Car park was clear of vehicles, meaning that the market stalls could be erected by 8am on 17 May.

Numbers attending were good, despite the inclement weather and the FA Cup Final, and early feedback from some of those attending said that it was the busiest Fayre for some years. The organisers were complimented on the range of stalls and sideshows provided.

The Chairman thanked the Community Development Officer for her Champion News report and for her efforts on behalf of the residents of Baldock and the surrounding district.

### **RESOLVED:**

That the Committee endorsed the actions taken by the Community Development Officer to promote greater community capacity and wellbeing

### **REASON FOR DECISION:**

To allow the Committee to enforce the actions and policies involved in the tasks and projects undertaken by the Community Development Officer.

**12. BALDOCK AND DISTRICT AREA COMMITTEE DEVELOPMENT AND AREA VISIONING BUDGETS 2008/2009**

The Community Development Officer (CDO) tabled three grant applications for determination at the Meeting.

Members were asked to note the information in Appendix 1, which related to Area Committee Budget balances for the Financial Year 2008/09, the pre-allocations carried forward from 2007/08, and the balances allocated to Visioning Budgets available to respective wards within the Baldock and District area.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the budgetary expenditure, current balances and carry forwards from the Ward Development Budgets 2008/09, the Small Area Grants Budget and the allocated Area Visioning Budgets be noted;
- (2) That the Baldock and District Committee considers and allocates the sum of £250 for the Baldock Branch of Herts Action on Disability Group in order to support the Group's activities in the current financial year. This would be split between the Wards of Baldock Town and Baldock East;
- (3) That £400 is allocated by the Baldock and District Committee for part funding of a static CCTV pole in The Tene, Baldock for periodic placement of a mobile camera;
- (4) That the sum of £1,200 is allocated from the 2007/08 Weston and Sandon Ward budget to contribute towards the replacement of tables and chairs;

**REASON FOR DECISIONS**

To use the allocation of funds that are available and accessed by various members of the community to improve the services provided by the local organisations and groups. That the Committee notes the response to the Scrutiny Committee as detailed in Appendix 3.

- 13. GRANT APPLICATION – BALDOCK BRANCH OF HERTS ACTION ON DISABILITY**  
**RESOLVED:** That the sum of £250 from the Baldock Town and Baldock East Ward Discretionary Development Budgets be approved to assist with the funding of the yearly programme of events and activities for the Baldock Branch of Herts Action on Disability Group.

**REASON FOR DECISION**

The allocation of funds would improve the services provided by the local organisations and groups that are available and accessed by various members of the community.

- 14. GRANT APPLICATION – COMMUNITY SUPPORT TEAM**  
**RESOLVED:** That the sum of £400 be allocated to provide a pole to support a mobile CCTV camera outside The Tene Sheltered Housing Scheme owned by North Herts Homes.

**REASON FOR DECISION**

The allocation of funds would improve the services provided by the local organisations and groups that are available and accessed by various members of the community.

- 15. GRANT APPLICATION – SANDON PARISH COUNCIL**  
**RESOLVED:** That the sum of £1,200 be allocated to provide part funding from the Weston and Sandon Discretionary Development Budget for the replacement of tables and chairs for Sandon Village Hall.

**16. GRANT APPLICATION – GRASS MAZE IN BALDOCK**

It was proposed that the sum of £350 be allocated to assist in part funding of maintaining the grass maze at The Avenue Park. However this was not resolved, as the Committee Member who is also the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and E-Government, stated that he would look into the possibility of funding this from the North Herts District Council Leisure Budget.

The meeting closed at 8.24p.m.

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Chairman