

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 21 July 2008 at 7.30 p.m.**

MINUTES

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

IN ATTENDANCE: *Patrick Candler (Head of Community Development and Cultural Services)
Claire Morgan (Community Development Officer)
Susanne Gow (Committee and Member Services Officer).*

ALSO PRESENT: A member of the public arrived at 8pm.

17. 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.

18. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

19. MINUTES – 2 JUNE 2008

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meetings held on 2 June 2008 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

20. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

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

21. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation registered for this meeting.

22. WICKSTEED XERSCAPE EQUIPMENT

Mr David Owen of Wicksteed gave a presentation on the Xerscape equipment which was suitable for all ages from 12 years to adult, including the elderly, and which can be sited in parks and open spaces.

Mr Owen informed the Baldock and District Committee that there were originally 20 to 30 pieces of exercise equipment, but that the Centre for Sport and Exercise Research at Staffordshire University had been commissioned to carry out extensive research on the construction, safe use and durability of the equipment, and as a result just 12 pieces of equipment had been approved by Professor Rachel Davey, Director of the Centre for Sport and Exercise Research, and as a result just 12 pieces of equipment had been approved by Professor Rachel Davey, Director of the Centre for Sport and Exercise Research at Staffordshire University.

These high quality pieces had been trialled in Manchester, Havering, Huntingdon and Bedford. Each piece had been examined and put into a "scheme" in a certain order to resemble circuit training, so that when users moved around the scheme in the correct order they would have a healthy and varied workout, including cardio, mobility, strength, toning and flexibility. It was emphasised that it was unwise to work on two different pieces consecutively which had the same function, as this may well lead to injury. Each piece of equipment had labels on them explaining the function,

instructions and length of time for use, according to whether the user was a beginner, moderately fit or very fit/athletic person. There was also information on safety and a disclaimer on each piece.

The Chairman thanked Mr Owen for his presentation and the Committee discussed the equipment, also questioning the presenter as to the price, presumed lifespan of the equipment, whether they were graffiti-proof, what maintenance would be required and how to keep children from climbing on the equipment. Mr Owen revealed that the plan is to keep the equipment quite separate from any children's playground equipment (at least 25 yards away) and this appears to work in the areas which already use the equipment. He stated that most users agree that the right location is extremely important to the efficiency of the equipment, together with the relevant surface on which it is situated. It was suggested that the Committee Members visit the scheme in Bedford, to get a better idea of the setup, physical size of all equipment in the scheme, the surface chosen by Bedford on which to locate the scheme, and any advantages or disadvantages which are apparent.

The Chairman asked the Community Development Officer and the Head of Community Development and Cultural Services to take this forward on behalf of the Committee, liaising with places which already use this equipment, and reporting back to the Baldock and District Committee in due course, after their fact finding. This they agreed to do.

23. BALDOCK TOWN HALL STAKEHOLDERS' GROUP

Ms Jeni Gosling of the Arts Group who was due to give the Baldock and District Committee a verbal update on the plans of the Baldock Town Hall Stakeholders' Group was unwell and nobody else from the Arts Group was able to attend the Committee Meeting. This item, therefore, was rescheduled to the Agenda of the next meeting of the Baldock and District Committee, on Monday 22 September 2008.

The Baldock and District Committee then had a short general discussion on the refurbishment and future use of Baldock Town Hall, and the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and E-Government stated that he was concerned that all users of the Town Hall were not disadvantaged by the funding arrangements and lack of communication. He had discovered that some users in the Stakeholders' Group had not been informed that Baldock Town Hall was closed, and that meetings were being held over its future without their knowledge. The Leisure and E-Government Portfolio Holder declared that it was vital that all stakeholders were informed of all the meetings to be held, and that accurate records were kept on a database of all the names involved.

He then confirmed that funding was only short term, and that a lease arrangement should be developed with Mrs Joanna Cherry, to generate income to keep the building going. There was an impression that Baldock Town Hall would be handed straight over to, and run by, the Baldock Town Hall Stakeholders' Group, but that was not likely to be in the near future, although Group was likely to be running it in due course. It was stressed that the lease was open to all users, and that the Baldock and District Committee should be kept informed at all times.

24. AREA COMMITTEE SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS – REVIEW OF 2006-2009 AND PROPOSALS FOR 2009-2012

The Head of Community Development and Cultural Services (HCDCS) had submitted a report for the Baldock and District Committee's consideration and their decision as to their preferred approach to the provision of locally-focussed Service Level Agreements (SLA) for the period from 2009 to 2012.

The HCDCS emphasised that any decision made should be within the context of the strategic approach to the development of the next phase of the SLA above, prior to its final approval by Cabinet on 21 October 2008.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Community Development and Cultural Services for his report, and the Baldock and District Committee entered into a discussion, consulting the HCDCS for clarification before they made their decisions.

Appendix 2 was examined, and the Chairman declared a personal interest in the Baldock Senior Club as a member.

The conclusion to which the Committee came when discussing the Baldock Festival and the budget set for this event, was that it had not been increased for some time. Officers were asked to investigate increasing the budget and report back in good time for the next meeting on 22 September 2008.

The suggestion was made that Baldock Rotary Club would be an ideal candidate for a SLA, as each year they applied to the Committee for funds for the Baldock Christmas lights. The Chairman also declared a personal interest in this item, as he was a member of Baldock Rotary Club. The Baldock and District Committee discussed this proposal for setting up a new SLA, and decided that it was very sensible to do so, as it would ensure that both parties would be fully aware of the agreed annual sum paid by the Committee to the Rotary Club through the SLA, and the Club could depend on these financial resources and go elsewhere if they needed further funds for the lights.

The Head of Community Development and Cultural Services asked the Baldock and District Committee to consider setting up further SLAs, and to then notify him so that he could ensure their preparation.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Baldock and District Committee note the review of the local Service Level Agreement (SLA) arrangements for 2007/08 as set out in Appendix 2 to the Report of the Head of Community Development and Cultural Services;
- 2) That the Baldock and District Committee note that a rebalancing of the funding of SLA is proposed to better reflect the district wide/local area focus;
- 3) That the Baldock and District Committee determine the approach to be adopted for any further tranche of SLA to be funded through Area Committees for 2009/12;
- 4) That the Baldock and District Committee confirm that the detailed negotiations with individual projects will be conducted by relevant officers, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement and Rural Affairs (for major and minor funded projects), and Area Committee Chairmen;
- 5) That the Baldock and District Committee note the proposed timescale for implementing the new SLA;
- 6) That the Baldock and District Committee receive a further report on SLA outcomes later in the year 2008/09, as part of the Corporate Business Planning Process.

REASON FOR DECISIONS:

To confirm the future strategic policy direction for the programme of financial assistance for the voluntary and community sector, through the negotiation of SLA.

25. LETCHWORTH GATE AND JUNCTION 9 OF THE A1(M)

The Chairman led a discussion on the Report of the Technical Standards and Programmes Manager, Hertfordshire Highways, which had been presented to the meeting of the North Hertfordshire Highways Partnership-Joint Member Panel (NHHJMP) held on 21 April 2008. Also included in the discussion was Minute 51 of the above meeting, which summarised that Committee's debate.

The Chairman stated that Letchworth Committee had had a similar discussion and had unanimously voted against any changes to the conclusions arrived at by the NHHJMP. The Committee agreed that one result of the layout of the roundabout at Junction 9 of the A1(M) and Letchworth Gate was that many motorists preferred to travel through the centre of Baldock because of hold-ups at the roundabout over the A1(M), rather than take the route past the longabout to the motorway and the Baldock Bypass to travel north.

Realistic suggestions as to practical solutions to the situation were made as follows:

- 1) The highway leading from Junction 9 into Letchworth should be one lane, and the road leading out of Letchworth from the longabout to Junction 9 of the A1(M) should be dualled;
- 2) The slip road for traffic to go north, currently two exits, should be restored to the original three (including a slip road leading to the A1(M) North);
- 3) There should be two lanes back to Baldock Lane in both directions;
- 4) The signage directing traffic at the junction should be vastly improved.

The Committee agreed that a referral should be made to the next meeting of the North Hertfordshire Highways Partnership-Joint Member Panel on 13 October 2008.

RESOLVED: That the North Hertfordshire Highways Partnership-Joint Membership Panel be advised of the opinions and suggestions raised by the Baldock and District Committee.

RECOMMENDED TO THE NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE HIGHWAYS PARTNERSHIP-JOINT MEMBERSHIP PANEL:

- 1) That the feasibility of having two lanes exiting Letchworth from the Longabout to the A1(M) and one lane into Letchworth from Letchworth Gate, be investigated;
- 2) That the slip road for traffic to go north, currently two exits, should be restored to the original three exits (to include a slip road to the A1(M) North);
- 3) That there be two lanes from Baldock Lane to Letchworth Gate in each direction;
- 4) That the signage down to the A1(M) be revisited with a view to improvement and clarification. This would mean that all traffic to Luton was directed south on the A1(M) to Junction 8 and thence via the Wymondley Bypass to Luton.

REASON FOR DECISIONS:

To ensure that Baldock and District Committee take a full and effective role in the decisions regarding Letchworth Gate and Junction 9 of the A1(M).

26. CHAMPION NEWS

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

North Herts Big F.A.B. Event

The CDO reported that this event, which had included 'Talking About My Generation' on 14 June 2008, had been extremely successful, with more than 100 people attending.

Feedback from the event had covered:

1. Public transport – lack of bus routes
2. Face to face provision of information
3. Local leisure facilities and activities and
4. Low cost meeting room hire.

This feedback would be used to draw up the 50+ Development Plan for 2009-2012, and had been disseminated to those who have decision-making influence over the issues raised, partnership organisations and whoever else had requested a copy.

Baldock Town Centre Enhancement Scheme

The Baldock Town Centre Enhancement Scheme had commenced on site on 9 June 2008 as planned, and Skanska McNicholas had set up a compound in part of the Twitchell car park.

Skanska, the engineers and designers for the project and the utility companies were currently in discussion regarding detailed design issues with underground services in the initial work areas of the programme. This had resulted in Skanska bringing forward other areas of works to maintain momentum, and to ensure that they were on schedule with the overall programme. The NHDC website showed a revised phasing programme, and this can also be viewed at the Baldock Community Centre.

The condition of cellars within the project area have been checked by Skanska and NHDC, to ensure that they do not conflict with the proposed works.

The Baldock and District Committee agreed to contact the Principal Engineer, Planning Projects Department, reference the ancient bus shelter in Baldock High Street near Simpson Drive. It is used by elderly persons to sit and rest, and there is concern as to whether it will survive the Baldock Town Centre Enhancement Scheme or not. The Committee would like to see it saved, as it is in keeping with the character of Baldock, and asked whether it could be retained in the same location or taken down and re-erected elsewhere. The Principal Engineer will be asked to report back to the next Meeting of the Baldock and District Committee with an update on this, at the next meeting on 22 September.

Clothall Village Hall

NHDC's Building Control Department had been asked for permission to start the process of demolishing the old village hall from 14 July 2008.

A revised planning application had been submitted to locate the new village hall building further back on the site, to give more space for car parking.

Baldock and District Youth Council

The Community Development Officer had undertaken a feasibility study into setting up a Youth Council for Baldock in support of the NHDC Corporate Plan. A provisional meeting had been set up to discuss this with the Extended Schools Co-ordinator for Baldock on 22 July, and it was hoped that the project could commence in September 2008.

Councillor Young offered his assistance as this was his area of expertise, and he declared that it was vital that the organisers move quickly, and also inform children in the last year of primary school, so that when they proceeded to secondary school they were fully aware of the aims and methods of the Baldock and District Youth Council.

Baldock Town Hall Works

On 24 June 2008, Cabinet approved the refurbishment works for Baldock Town Hall. The Chairman proposed a vote of thanks to the Cabinet Committee for the funding given, to the tune of 50,000.

A project team was set up and a provisional works programme has been developed around the time schemes of the proposed arts and drama activities co-ordinated by the Town Hall Arts Group which are due to start in October 2008. This Group is one of two that have been chosen to form part of the Advancing Assets pilot demonstration in conjunction with NHDC.

The Arts Group are also being advised by NHDC officers on securing funds from Awards for All and other matters regarding the programme of activities and the structure and constitution of the Group.

Joanna Cherry, one of the project co-ordinators, is due to attend the Baldock and District Committee Meeting on 22 September 2008 to give the Committee an update.

The Committee had a short discussion about the refurbishing works to be done, and stated that both partition walls on the ground floor should be removed to enlarge the space available for use.

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.

25. 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.

The Baldock and District Committee examined Appendix 5 and discussed the items listed for proposed 50% matched funding. All were agreed except for the item on the junction of Station Road and Lucas Lane in Ashwell, where there had been a fatality. The Member for Arbury made the point that he considered that safety schemes should not be subject to 50% matched funding from Area Committees, but should be carried entirely by Hertfordshire Highways. He declared that 50% matched funding for this feasibility study would consist of his total Ward budget, which he would rather give to 50% match fund the final solution to the safety problem.

The Baldock and District Committee agreed, and the matter was to be put to Steve Greenhill of Hertfordshire Highways, for his response. The member for Arbury declared his willingness to put this matter to the NHHPJMP Committee in person at their next meeting on 13 October 2008.

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 notes and acknowledges the pre-allocations of uncommitted Ward Development Discretionary Funds to respective projects and initiatives within each Ward budget;
- 3) That £250 is allocated by the Baldock and District Committee towards funding new sound equipment, to enable St Mary's Church, Baldock to be better utilised for community events, concerts and performances;
- 4) That officers consider their advice to Committee Members concerning the possibility of an allocation of £1,000 towards a feasibility study to ascertain the benefits of either rebuilding the Baldock Guide Hut or refurbishing the existing facility;
- 5) That a funding allocation of £300 towards two Holiday Clubs is considered. The Clubs would be based at Knights Templar School from 18 to 22 August 2008, and one Club would be for children aged from 5 to 11 years, and the other for young people aged 12 to 14 years;

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.

- 6) That the North Hertfordshire Highways Partnership-Joint Membership Panel be advised of the opinions and suggestions of the Baldock and District Committee regarding the Hertfordshire Highways project Station Road, Ashwell (50% joint matched funding in the sum of £2,750 requested from the Arbury Ward budget for a feasibility study), and as the decision was deferred, to revisit this project in the light of a change in rules for road safety schemes.

RECOMMENDED TO THE NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE HIGHWAYS PARTNERSHIP-JOINT MEMBERSHIP PANEL:

That the following project was reviewed by the Baldock and District Committee and it was agreed that the feasibility study be funded in full by Hertfordshire Highways, and any request for funding of remedial action be referred back to Baldock and District Committee for consideration. It was suggested that the JMP should revisit this project in the light of a change of rules for road safety schemes.

Road Safety Schemes	Junction at war memorial – Lucas Lane/Station Road. Feasibility study to review junction following fatal accident	50% = £2,750 Decision deferred	Arbury Ward
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REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure that Baldock and District Area funding is utilised to optimum effect.

26. GRANT APPLICATION – CHRISTCHURCH, BALDOCK

RESOLVED: That the sum of £300 be allocated for two summer holiday clubs (£150 to each), one for children aged 5 to 11 years and the other for young people aged 12 to 14 years. The clubs will provide a range of activities designed to promote life skills and healthy living, and will enable the participants to become responsible members of the community.

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.

27. GRANT APPLICATION – BALDOCK DISTRICT GUIDE ASSOCIATION

RESOLVED: That allocation of the sum of £1,000 towards a feasibility study to ascertain the benefits of refurbishment of the Baldock Guide HQ or demolition and rebuilding on the existing site be deferred, as it was felt that the full cost of £3,000 was excessive for a feasibility study.

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.

28. GRANT APPLICATION – ST MARY’S PARISH CHURCH, BALDOCK

RESOLVED: That the sum of £250 be allocated to provide part funding for the installation of a sound system to support concerts and other community events and performances.

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.

The meeting closed at 9.30p.m.

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Chairman

