

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 22 September 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:
*Claire Morgan (Community Development Officer)
Susanne Gow (Committee and Member Services Officer).*

ALSO PRESENT: *Joanna Cherry – Baldock Theatre Group
Sue Watkins – Baldock District Guides
Lee Tyson – Countryside Management Services*

31. 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.

The Chairman also announced that Committee Members and members of the public were invited to attend the Annual Community Conference which would be held in the Spirella Ballroom on 10 November at 6 for 6.30p.m. The event would include the launch of the new Sustainable Community Strategy for North Hertfordshire and there would be displays.

This was an open event, but people were requested to book in advance so that catering and other arrangements could be planned. Interested parties were asked to contact Jim Brown, NHDC Policy Manager, on 01462 474835 for enquiries, programmes and to register.

32. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

33. MINUTES – 21 JULY 2008

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meetings held on 21 July 2008 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

34. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

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

35. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation registered for this meeting.

36. BALDOCK TOWN HALL STAKEHOLDERS' GROUP

Mrs Joanna Cherry of the Baldock Theatre Group thanked the Committee for giving her and her colleague Mrs Clare Heyhoe, the opportunity to give them an update on the plans for, and the refurbishment work being done to, Baldock Town Hall.

She informed Members that refurbishment work on the Town Hall is on schedule to be completed by the end of September 2008. It was anticipated that seating would be installed at the beginning of October 2008.

A three-week programme for the Baldock Arts Festival had been put together, stressing youth, literature and poetry. Dawn French would be visiting Baldock during the Festival, and would talk about her new book; theatre workshops would be run for young people, led by three directors from the National Youth Theatre, and all priced so as to be affordable to the young people of Baldock and the surrounding villages. Ms Cherry saw this as a taster period, and there would be discussion at the conclusion of the Baldock Arts Festival as to whether to set up permanent theatre groups for young people. They also planned to hold theatre and drama workshops for young people during the half term period.

It was confirmed that the Town Hall facilities could in theory be used by dance groups, judo, badminton and aerobics groups as well as voluntary groups, as the aim was for this facility to serve the whole community, including the villages in the Baldock area. Bookings for Baldock Town Hall Arts Festival would be publicised through local schools and parish magazines and flyers and posters would be put up in libraries and bus shelters and flyers sent to all parish clerks in Baldock and District.

The Committee then discussed the contribution that the use of Baldock Town Hall would make to the community groups and residents of Baldock. Points raised and suggestions made covered: the ability to make Baldock Town Hall generate income to cover costs by hiring it out to groups and classes; suggested methods of ensuring the facility was advertised throughout Baldock and the surrounding villages, using primary schools as well as secondary schools such as Knights Templar; use of the Baldock Community Centre, to sell tickets for musical, dance and drama performances and other events and workshops there. The suggestion was made to investigate forging links with North Herts College, whose curriculum covers Performing Arts to degree level.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Cherry and Mrs Heyhoe for their interesting presentation and for the information given to the Baldock and District Committee, and informed them that they would be advised of the result of their grant application in due course.

37. PRESENTATION BY THE BALDOCK GUIDE ASSOCIATION

Mrs Sue Watkins addressed the Baldock and District Committee on the history of the Baldock Guide Hut. It was used as a cricket pavilion until 30 years ago, when its use was hanged to that of a Guide Hut. Mrs Watkins explained that building insurance has risen to £1500 p.a., and they have paid electricity bills amounting to £625 to date this year (2008). There are also issues with disabled access. The crux of the matter is that the Guide Hut needs either serious reconstruction or refurbishment to meet the needs of those who use it: the Guide Association and the community in general.

She also revealed that the Guide Association (GA) are now on a 12-month renewable lease, which does not facilitate forward planning. They would prefer to be on the 21-year lease mentioned by the NHDC Property Services Manager Jim Turner.

The Baldock Guide leaders are worried that as the title to the land in front of the building is owned by Headway Building, if they decide to fence off any part of their car park there would be no way that lorries could access the land on which the Guide Hut stands, in order to renovate or reconstruct the building. Mrs Watkins revealed that a survey has been carried out on the building and the site assessed, carrying a total cost of £2,500, but the Baldock GA are worried that there may be add-on costs. To date they have managed to raise £6,500, and a grant from the Baldock and District Committee would be a great help them to go forward with commissioning a feasibility study.

The Committee Members then asked Mrs Watkins questions and gave her their advice where it was relevant. They asked Mrs Watkins who owned the land in front of the Baldock Guide Hut, as it was thought that this could well belong to Hertfordshire Highways. It was suggested that the GA borrow the money for building costs, and to seek a minimum lease of 35 years, to be renewed for at least 35 years, to give the GA some security. It was also suggested that the NHDC Legal Department could help investigate the title to the land, and they should definitely be advised that Headway is seeking the title to the land.

The Committee assured Mrs Watkins of their unanimous support, and any assistance that she needed, they would try to deliver. She was advised to employ somebody fully qualified but local, if possible the parent of one of the Guides, who could offer expertise at a reasonable cost, to supply Baldock GA with architectural advice and plans and any advice on building and engineering that was needed. The suggestion was made that a committee should be formed consisting of parents and professionals who would do the work for nothing, as had happened with Hinxworth Parish Hall. Mrs Watkins said that when they had tried to form a committee, only three people had come forward, although the Guiding Units that used the Baldock Guide Hut consisted of 130 Guides, Brownies and Rainbows and the Trefoil Guild. On the subject of employing surveyors etc, Mrs Watkins was informed that if the GA employed an architect, he could design and project manage the building, and also put the figures together and manage the cash flow.

It was suggested that the money raised by Baldock Guide Association should be used for the feasibility study, and any money awarded by North Herts District Council should go towards actual building costs. Another suggestion was looking through the telephone directory to find local building companies and architects, who could be promised free advertising for reasonably-priced work for Baldock Guide Association.

The Community Development Officer said that the Senior Community Development Officer had been in touch with the NHDC Legal team about this matter, and was awaiting their comments.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Watkins for her presentation, and said that she would be advised of the result of the Baldock Guide Association's grant application in due course.

38. PRESENTATION ON BEHALF OF FRIENDS OF BALDOCK GREENSPACES

Lee Tyson, Assistant Manager of Countryside Management Service (CMS) North Eastern Area, thanked the Chairman for the chance to address the Baldock and District Committee on the aims and general work of the CMS.

He said that CMS was a Hertfordshire County Council organisation and had been working in Hertfordshire for over 35 years with local communities, helping them to care for and enjoy their environment.

They supported green spaces through various communities, groups, volunteer work and healthy walking schemes and also worked with local farmers.

Lee Tyson explained that Friends of Baldock Greenspaces (FoBG) was a partnership between local members of the community, including volunteers, that worked together with CMS to improve access, signage, branding, information, biodiversity and training to enable FoBG to work safely and effectively, with greater independence. Work had been going on for some time on Ivel Springs, for which there was delivery of a 5-year management plan, and the site had attracted a grant from WREN which has contributed to biodiversity, and uses capital from outside sources. This work was aimed to improve access, including disabled and vehicular access, to the site. Volunteers have been trained to use machinery and to plan and to lead work, so that they gain skills and can work independently. He said that Ivel Springs' interpretation panels will appear on the CMS website. Friends of Baldock Greenspaces have cleared paths, and work has concluded for the season.

Mr Tyson also informed the Committee that volunteer activity has also in recent months been focussed on Weston Hills, improving access and habitat creation. Work will continue there over the winter months, removing scrub to link two important areas of chalk grassland. He would encourage anybody who was interested to come and help.

In the area of Clothall Common, ideas had been discussed with Cllr Kirkland and local residents, resulting in two ditch crossings having been installed by volunteers to enable residents to access the old Wallington Road off-road walking route. There are plans to include local residents' efforts to make the area more attractive by planting hedgerows

and creating a wildflower area at the entrance. This will be followed by an ongoing programme of enhancing local habitat, installing bird/bat boxes taking place over the next few years.

The Chairman thanked Mr Tyson for his fascinating presentation, and suggested that as all Committee Members had expressed their interest, their contact details were passed to him to be put onto the mailing list for voluntary tasks. **Action for SG (done)**

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

Following the report submitted by the Head of Community Development and Cultural Services (HCDCS) at the last Committee Meeting, the Baldock and District Committee discussed the Service Level Agreements (SLAs) that were currently in place, and whether these should continue for another 3-year term. These were:

- Baldock Sewing Group
- Baldock Senior Club
- Baldock Festival
- Baldock Town Twinning Association
- Ashwell Museum

Agreement was reached that these SLAs should continue, and discussion ensued as to which new organisations would benefit from a SLA.

The Chairman declared a personal interest, as he was both a member of Baldock Senior Club and Baldock Rotary Club.

Due to the annual grant applications requested by Baldock Rotary Club for the maintenance and purchase of Christmas lights for Baldock, it was agreed that a 3-year SLA would be beneficial to both Baldock Rotary Club, who would have a guaranteed income for the lights, and also to the Baldock and District Committee's budget, as they would know exactly what would be going out for the next three years. It was agreed that for this period, £750 would be contributed by Baldock Town Ward and £250 from Baldock East Ward, making an annual SLA of £1,000 for the period 2009/2012.

40. 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 21 July 2008.

Baldock Town Centre Enhancement Scheme

The CDO reported that the contractors were making good progress to ensure that they were on schedule with the overall programme, and were on budget. They had progressed with the footways and parking bays along the northern side of Whitehorse Street, the footways along Hitchin Street and much of the footway along the eastern side of High Street, as well as laying York stone paviers along the front of buildings in High Street and Whitehorse Street and a tarmac temporary surface in preparation for a gravel buff footway surface throughout the area to be laid near the end of the contract.

The Committee were told that the contractors were currently working in Sun Street, and they intended to complete the granite sets in Sun Street and at the entrance to Whitehorse Street before the start of the Baldock Fair in early October. A meeting had been held between the Fair stallholders, the contractors and the CDO, and the assurance was given that there would be minimal problems, as any damage to the new work would need to be paid for. It was stated that poles would mark the spots where trees were to be sited.

The CDO informed the Committee that the contractors were being very flexible about parking, to allow business in Baldock to continue, and were making every effort to keep disruption to a minimum.

The updated contractors' work programme was available on the NHDC website, and the design can be viewed on the Masterplan in the Baldock Community Centre.

Old Wallington Road

Volunteers from the Countryside Management Service had built two ditch board bridges, and the planting of hedgerows would be completed between November 2008 and January 2009.

Clothall Village Hall

Following the demolition of the old village hall, the land was being prepared for the removal of a large amount of soil prior to the construction of the new village hall.

Baldock Youth Council

The Community Development Officer had set up a steering group to form a Youth Council for young people living or attending school in Baldock. The group consisted of North Herts District (NHD) Councillors and officers, together with representatives from Youth Connexions, the Police and the Extended Schools Coordinator. Advertising had been carried out during September and October through youth groups and schools, and the steering group would go into schools during the week commencing 3 November 2008. The first official meeting to set up the Baldock Youth Council would take place on 19 November, chaired by Youth Connexions from 4.30-6.00pm at Baldock Community Centre

It was hoped that recruits for the Youth Council would come forward from this meeting, and the steering group would help them with the formation of a committee, finding a venue for their meetings, drawing up their constitution, setting up a bank account for the Youth Council, as well as working as a team.

Expectations were that the first formal meeting of the Baldock Youth Council would take place during December 2008.

Baldock Town Hall Renovation Works

The CDO revealed that good progress had been made with the renovation of Baldock Town Hall, and it was expected that they would be completed by the end of September 2008.

Baldock Arts and the Performing Arts Festival in October

The Baldock Arts Group had been assisted by the CDO with the Premises Licence Application, and a full and varied programme had been drawn up and was about to be confirmed, and then published.

Christchurch Summer Holiday Club

This had been very successful, with approximately 50 children attending during the week.

New Sound System for St Mary's Church

This had been successfully installed, and provided better and more reliable amplification, especially for voices. It will greatly enhance forthcoming events, such as choir concerts and the Fashion Show in October.

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.

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

The Community Development Officer (CDO) had submitted five grant applications for determination at the Meeting.

Members discussed the issues and funding decisions to be made, which covered financial assistance towards the Baldock Performing Arts Festival, the refurbishment or rebuilding of Baldock Guide Hut, provision of a new waste bin for Nightingale Park, provision of Christmas lights for Baldock Town Centre and financial assistance for Baldock Town Youth Football Club. The decisions made follow below.

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 was noted;
- 2) That the Baldock and District Committee noted and acknowledged the pre-allocations of uncommitted Ward Development Discretionary Funds to respective projects and initiatives within each Ward budget;
- 3) That the sum of £1,500 was allocated by the Baldock and District Committee towards funding the Baldock Performing Arts Festival. To be split proportionately through all the Wards;
- 4) That the Members considered a funding allocation towards a feasibility study to ascertain the benefits of either refurbishing the existing Baldock Guide Hut or rebuilding a new facility. The Committee decided that funding feasibility studies was not criteria compliant and they therefore could not commit the funding requested at present. They would, however, support the project in the future and would consider funding towards any building works that may take place;
- 5) That the Baldock and District Committee made a funding allocation of £306 towards the purchase and installation of a new waste bin in Nightingale park;
- 6) That the Members considered a funding allocation via a new Service Level Agreement to Baldock Rotary Club, to pay for new LED Christmas light panels for the High Street. The funding was split into £1,000 from Baldock Town Ward, with an additional proportional percentage allocation (24%) from Baldock East Ward, totalling £1,240;
- 7) That the Baldock and District Committee considered a funding allocation to Baldock Town Youth Football Club towards the cost of training coaches, providing new equipment and covering the cost of CRB checks for volunteers. The amount decided on was £1,500 to be split proportionately (76:24) between Baldock Town and Baldock East Wards;
- 8) That the Baldock and District Committee considered and agreed the provision of Service Level Agreements to local organisations as stated, for the financial years 2009/2012.

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.

42. GRANT APPLICATION – BALDOCK PERFORMING ARTS FESTIVAL

RESOLVED: That the sum of £1,500 be allocated as part funding for the 3-week Performing Arts Festival starting on 17 October 2008. The Festival will provide cultural activities for the whole community (all ages) as well as promoting Baldock as a thriving cultural hub. This sum would be split proportionately through all the Wards.

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.

- 43. 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 was refused as funding feasibility studies is not criteria compliant.
- REASON FOR DECISION:**
Not compliant with NHDC funding criteria.
- 44. GRANT APPLICATION – NHDC GROUNDS MAINTENANCE**
RESOLVED: That the sum of £306 be allocated to provide a waste bin in an area of Nightingale Park prone to littering, being one of the entrances/exits to the park.
- 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.
- 45. GRANT APPLICATION - ROTARY CLUB OF BALDOCK**
RESOLVED: That an allocation of the sum of £1,240 be made towards the refurbishment and extension of the display of Christmas lights in Baldock Town Centre, including the purchase of six new LED, energy-efficient panels. £1,000 is to come from Baldock Town Ward, with an additional proportional percentage allocation (24%) from Baldock East Ward, totalling £1,240.
- 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.
- 46. GRANT APPLICATION – BALDOCK TOWN YOUTH FOOTBALL CLUB**
RESOLVED: That the allocation of the sum of £1,500 be allocated towards the training of teams at Baldock Town Youth Football Club, as well as the purchase of team equipment, courses for coaches and CRB checks for new volunteers. The sum was to be split proportionately (76:24) between Baldock Town and Baldock East Wards.
- 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 9.20p.m.

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Chairman