

**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 17 November 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:** *Mary Caldwell (Planning Control and Conservation Manager)  
Barrie Jones (Head of Finance)  
Claire Morgan (Community Development Officer)  
Susanne Gow (Committee and Member Services Officer).*

**ALSO PRESENT:** *Ross Watkins – North Herts Vegetarians and Vegans  
  
10 members of the public.*

**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 with the Committee Members' agreement he would take additional grant applications for Weston Parish Council and Baldock Scouts after Item 10 on the Agenda.

This was agreed by the Members of Baldock and District Committee.

**32. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies for absence were received.

**33. MINUTES – 22 SEPTEMBER 2008**

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meetings held on 22 September 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**

Mr Ross Watkins of the North Herts Vegetarian and Vegan group addressed the Baldock and District Committee for 5 minutes on the subject of live animals in circuses, and the cruelty they suffered through being confined, the continuous travelling to which they were subjected and the size of their pens and travelling quarters. He claimed that the majority of these animals appeared to be in a less than satisfactory condition, and asked for the Committee's support to end this cruel practice.

Mr Watkins explained that at present out of the 152 animals "working" in circuses in the United Kingdom, 30 were wild animals. To date 318 Local Authorities had banned the issue of licenses to circuses containing animals, and his object was to persuade North Herts District Council to also refuse the issue of these licences.

The Chairman thanked Mr Watkins for addressing the Committee, and during the discussion that followed, Mr Watkins was asked to send to the Committee Administrator the Animal Aid's Compassionate Charter to which he referred, for distribution to the Members of the Baldock and District Committee. **Action:** Committee Administrator (done).

**36. SECTION 106 AGREEMENT AND UNILATERAL UNDERTAKINGS**

The Planning Control and Conservation Manager (PCCM) took the Baldock and District Committee through Appendix 1, the monitoring spreadsheet for Baldock and District.

She explained that these amounts are not allocated towards a specific project, but to North Herts District Council's (NHDC) strategies, and they must always contain Hertfordshire County Council's as well as NHDC's contributions. The PCCM went through the process of choosing schemes for funding works with small sums of money. This is now in the public domain, so it was through the Community Development Officer that the money available would be brought forward for use.

The Baldock and District Committee discussed this, agreeing that a mechanism should be agreed on to bring this to the Committee's attention, rather than it coming up on an ad hoc basis. On being asked for the criteria, the Members were told that they had to be buildings erected in the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) adopted by NHDC in November 2006 to regulate the preparation of Section 106 Agreements and Unilateral Undertakings in relation to development proposals in a particular place. However, schemes could be on the books for several years. It was stated that the Monitoring Officer will alert Area Committees when monies are due, and that the Section 106 monies were in relation to specific developments in specific places.

On being told that the Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) monies are also for specific issues, the question was raised as to whether they had the same criteria as NHDC monies. The Members agreed that they would like to see where HCC spent the money, and wondered whether this could be recorded on the spreadsheet for next time. It was suggested that money from other sources, such as Hertfordshire Highways (HH) was included and that Area Committees should be informed where this was to be spent.

It was decided that when the Members find out that a large development is to take place in their district, they should check from where the Section 106 money is coming. This money would be paid on commencement of the development and would come back to strategies through Cabinet.

The Chairman thanked the Planning Control and Conservation Manager for her clarification of the report, and moved to accept the recommendations.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the Baldock and District Committee note the content of the report;
- 2) That the Baldock and District Committee note the progress for the utilisation of the monies which would be included in the report to PARC on 11 December 2008;
- 3) That the Baldock and District Committee be presented with a report in the June 2009 cycle of meetings and on an annual basis thereafter;
- 4) That the Baldock and District Committee be presented with a report back every 6 months on monies received, so that Members can make decisions on how it can be spent.

**REASONS FOR DECISIONS:**

- 1) To ensure that there is a robust system for negotiating and managing Section 106 Agreements and Unilateral Undertakings;
- 2) To ensure that this is kept under constant review and that the risk associated with this activity is managed in an appropriate manner.

**37. CORPORATE BUSINESS PLANNING 2009-2014 (EFFICIENCIES AND INVESTMENTS)**

This report was presented by the Head of Financial Services. Before he began, the Chairman thanked him for his hard work on behalf of the Baldock and District Committee, and wished him all the best on his forthcoming retirement.

The Head of Financial Services stated that the report gave the position of Cabinet at its meeting on 21 October 2008. He explained the parameters relating to Council Tax, pay increases, inflation increase (5%+) and pension liabilities. A number of savings accounts were on fixed rates but were linked to rates of 5%.

Discussion ensued on current interest rates and their side effects, and the Head of Financial Services explained the procurement processes that would improve on capital expenditure. Comments from the Baldock and District Committee would go to Cabinet on 16 December 2008.

The Committee examined the Investment Proposals spreadsheets and on R1/8 questioned whether the level of spending on Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) was appropriate and whether CPZs were being phased out as TROs were cheaper and more efficient. They wanted to know whether there was enough money to sort out Baldock's TROs, and were told that money would be allocated to Baldock if it was given priority. There would be an ongoing budget for at least a 5-year forecast, and probably more. NHDC would not support any charges in the only public car park in Baldock, and part of the refurbishment work took into consideration that there must not be car park charges in Baldock in the near future.

Under Revenue Income Increases, the comment was made on the New Paper Recycling Contract that as part of a risk assessment, it should be seen what effect the falling prices would have on the budget. It was stated that recycling had grown from 25% to 40% and the prediction was made that by 2012 it would be 50%.

Under Capital Investment Proposals C1/1 the comment was made that savings would be made in the early days and lower maintenance costs would lead to revenue savings. The car parking strategy meant that all machines would eventually be replaced. Cllr Knighton as Portfolio Holder for Leisure and e-Government explained to his colleagues that the funds for the efficiencies in the use of IT equipment came from leasing rather than purchasing, leading to extra life of the asset. He stated that alternative ways to minimise costs were being looked at, and licenses being phased in.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Financial Services for his comprehensive report and again expressed good wishes for his retirement, from himself and the Members of the Baldock and District Committee.

**RESOLVED:** That the Baldock and District Committee gave its views on any changes to the efficiency and investment proposals.

**REASON FOR DECISION:**

To ensure that all Members are consulted on the proposed savings and growth bids and afforded the opportunity to comment before Cabinet sets the draft budget on 16 December 2008.

**38. AREA COMMITTEE SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS – PROPOSALS FOR 2009-2012**

The Chairman declared a personal interest in this item as a member of Baldock Senior Club, Baldock Town Twinning Association, Baldock Rotary Club and as Honorary President of Baldock Senior Club. Cllr Kirkland declared a personal interest in this item as a member of the Baldock Festival Committee, and Cllr Knighton declared an interest as an Outside Bodies Member of the Committees of the Baldock Senior Club and Baldock Town Twinning Association.

The proposed SLAs to be awarded for 2009-2012 were:

- Ashwell Museum (£350)
- Baldock Festival (£1,090)
- Baldock Retirement Sewing Club (£430)
- Baldock Rotary Club (£1,000)
- Baldock Seniors Club (£1,390)
- Baldock Town Twinning (£320)

The Community Development Officer (CDO) was asked to clarify the proposed timescale for implementation of the new SLA, and report back to the next meeting of the Baldock and District Committee on 12 January 2008.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the Baldock and District Committee agreed the proposed Service level Agreements for 2009-2012 as set out in para 4.6 of Item 8 of the published Agenda for the Committee Meeting held on 17 November 2008;
- 2) That the Baldock and District Committee note that a rebalancing of the funding of SLA is proposed to reflect better the district-wide/local area focus;
- 3) That the Baldock and District Committee confirm that any further detailed negotiations with individual projects will be conducted by the relevant officers, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement and Rural Affairs (for major and minor funded projects) and the Baldock and District Committee Chairman;
- 4) That the Baldock and District Committee note the proposed timescale for implementing the new SLA set out in para 4.7 of Item 8 of the published Agenda, and that the CDO clarifies this and reports back to the next Committee Meeting on 12 January 2008.

**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 Service Level Agreements.

**39. 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 22 September 2008.

**Baldock Town Centre Enhancement Scheme**

The CDO gave the Baldock and District Committee an update on the progress of the Baldock Town Centre Enhancement Scheme. She stated that in terms of traffic management, the update was provided in the light of having to satisfy Highways requirements and progressing the works in this difficult area as seamlessly as possible.

The CDO also declared that work will be starting along the footpaths at the junction of High Street/Hitchin Street/Whitehorse Street from Monday 24 November 2008. In order to manage the traffic movement in that area, three-way temporary traffic lights would also be installed by the contractors from that date in High Street, Hitchin Street and Whitehorse Street to allow traffic to travel as normal.

The Committee were told that after Christmas, High Street would be blocked off from Hitchin Street and Whitehorse Street, allowing traffic to travel east to west and vice versa, but not into or out of High Street from the north. Access to High Street would be from the southern (Tesco) end, and vehicles would have to make a U-turn at the northern end, where High Street would be closed beyond Simpson Drive.

### **Baldock Christmas Tree**

The CDO confirmed to the Committee that the Christmas Tree would not be in its usual location for Christmas 2008 due to the disruption caused by the Baldock Town Centre Enhancement Scheme, and that it was likely to be sited temporarily outside the Baldock Community Centre. The wooden notice board there was due to be re-sited, but this was now considered not to be financially viable. A permanent Christmas Tree socket would be installed in the usual place near the War Memorial for the future.

### **Knights Templar Music Project**

This project, which combined Knights Templar School, the Hertfordshire Music Service and four other secondary schools across the District, would involve workshops in composition led by musicians from the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. This would possibly include composing a fanfare to be played at the opening of the new Baldock Town Square and the music students would be the most gifted and talented, selected from the five secondary schools. A concert was planned alongside the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra for May 2009 at Knights Templar School.

### **Baldock Youth Council**

It was planned that the CDO, NHDC Children's Services, the Police and Youth Connexions would be meeting potential members of the Youth Council (YC) at Knights Templar School during early November. After completing questionnaires, the young people would be invited to an initial YC meeting on 19 November 2008.

### **Baldock Arts and the Performing Arts Festival in October/November 2008**

The CDO revealed that once the Baldock Town Hall renovations had been completed, the three-week Baldock Arts Festival running from mid-October had been very successful, some events having sold out.

Monthly tea dances had turned out to be successful at the Baldock Community Centre and would be continued, as would other events covering a variety of interests.

Unfortunately there was a lower than anticipated take-up of the young people's drama workshops, so these have been postponed until 2009 to aid co-ordination with the schools' drama timetables.

Literary events which had been planned will now be postponed to March 2009 and will form part of the North Hertfordshire Book Festival.

The CDO stated that there will be a debrief meeting with the Baldock Town Hall Stakeholder Group in December 2008 to review the Baldock Arts Festival and to discuss future plans for developing activities at the Town Hall. Representatives from the Development Trust Association (DTA) will attend, as they provided guidance and support in the lead up to the Festival, particularly relating to longer term independent financial arrangements.

### **Waste Bin in Nightingale Park**

This item had been ordered and installed.

### **Community Events**

It was requested at a recent Safety Advisory Team (SAT) that Members and officers who knew of any possible future events were asked to liaise with the SAT, prior to giving any initial advice to the organisers.

### **Annual Community Conference**

The Annual Community Conference took place on Monday 10 November in the Spirella Building, Bridge Road, Letchworth, and the Sustainable Community Strategy was launched at this event.

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.

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

The Community Development Officer (CDO) took the Baldock and District Committee through the spreadsheet of Committee Delegated Budgets 2008/09 at Appendix 1 and advised the Committee of three grant applications for determination. She had submitted one grant application via the Agenda (Appendix 2), but at the Baldock and District Committee Meeting the Chairman agreed to consider two further grant applications which had been put forward urgently.

Members discussed the issues and made funding decisions, which covered financial assistance of £300 to NHDC Grounds Maintenance towards provision and emptying of a dog bin on Yeomanry Drive; £2,500 to Weston Parish Council for toilet facilities in Weston pavilion – reallocated from footway lights; and £500 to 2<sup>nd</sup> Baldock Scouts to help finance the purchase of two tents for the Unit before a price rise in the New Year.

The CDO was asked to explore whether there was a way to fast track the process of approving contributions from Members' own Wards, as had been done with the two late grant applications.

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 be noted;
- 2) That the sum of £300 was allocated by the Baldock and District Committee to NHDC Grounds Maintenance towards funding the provision and emptying of a dog bin on Yeomanry Drive;
- 3) That Weston Parish Council be awarded the sum of £2,500 for toilets for the new recreation pavilion in Weston. This sum was reallocated from the footway lights, for which it was not used;
- 4) That the sum of £500 be allocated to 2<sup>nd</sup> Baldock Scouts to part fund the purchase of camping equipment, in particular a mess tent and a marquee, before prices rise in 2009. This sum was shared in the normal way with Baldock East Ward.

**REASONS 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.

**41. GRANT APPLICATION – NHDC GROUNDS MAINTENANCE**

**RESOLVED:** That the sum of £300 be allocated to NHDC Grounds Maintenance for the provision and regular emptying of a dog waste bin in Yeomanry Drive. 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.

**42. GRANT APPLICATION – WESTON PARISH COUNCIL**

**RESOLVED:** That the sum of £2,500 be allocated to Weston Parish Council for the provision of toilets for the new recreation pavilion in Weston. This sum was reallocated from the footway lights, for which it was not used.

**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 – 2<sup>nd</sup> BALDOCK SCOUT GROUP**

**RESOLVED:** That the sum of £500 be awarded to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Baldock Scout Group to help fund the purchase of a mess tent and a marquee. The reason for urgency for this grant application is to make the purchase before the rise in prices in 2009.

**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 9.27p.m.

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Chairman