

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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

Meeting held in Baldock Community Centre, Simpson Drive, Baldock
on 8 June 2009 at 7.30 p.m.

MINUTES

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

IN ATTENDANCE: *Mary Caldwell (Planning Control and Conservation Manager)
Claire Morgan (Community Development Officer)
Susanne Gow (Committee and Member Services Officer).*

ALSO PRESENT: *Sam Colderwood – Children’s Centre Manager, Spurgeons
2 members of the public.*

4. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been tendered to Committee Services by Cllr A. D. Young.

5. MINUTES – 30 MARCH 2009

Cllr Muir commented that in Minute 86, he had been referred to as the current Chairman of the Baldock Branch of the Royal British Legion. This was an error, as he was in fact the Honorary President of the organisation.

RESOLVED: That subject to the above correction, the Minutes of the Meeting held on 30 March 2009 and also the report of the election of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Baldock and District Committee on 30 April 2009, be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

6. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

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

7. CHAIRMAN’S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending.

He stated that he would like to put on record his, and the Committee’s thanks to the previous Chairman of Baldock and District Committee, for his dedication and hard work over the previous year.

The Chairman informed those present that Mr Nigel Cook, the Baldock Town Centre Manager, had sent his apologies to the Committee, as he had to attend another urgent meeting and was therefore unable to be present at this Baldock and District Committee Meeting, and that the Community Development Officer would include his report with her Champion News report.

He then 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. He proposed that Declarations of Interest should be made at the start of the relevant item on the Agenda.

The Chairman also welcomed Ms Sam Colderwood, who was to be the Manager of the Spurgeons Children’s Centre in Great Ashby, and would be overseeing the Manager of the Children’s Centre in Baldock, when he or she was appointed. He thanked her for attending the Committee Meeting and declared that the Committee looked forward with interest to her presentation on the proposed Spurgeons Children’s Centre in Baldock.

The Chairman then reminded the Committee that on the following Saturday, 13 June 2009, Mr Oliver Heald MP would be officiating at the Opening of Baldock Town Centre, and all Members of the Committee had received formal invitations.

Finally, the Chairman announced that a late grant application for Friends of St Mary's Church for renovations to the church clock face would be tabled at the Meeting, following the grant applications already on the Agenda.

8. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no participation by members of the public at this meeting.

9. SPURGEONS CHILDREN'S CENTRE

Sam Colderwood, Manager of the Spurgeons Children's Centre in Great Ashby, who would be overseeing the Manager of the Children's Centre in Baldock when he or she was appointed, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Baldock and District Committee.

She referred to the display she had created which gave the location of the children's centre in Baldock, and contained literature explaining its function and aims. She explained that Spurgeons aim was to have 82 children's centres in Hertfordshire by 2010 and that the Baldock Children's Centre would be sited at St Mary's Infant School, as it was felt that Weston Way Nursery was not compatible. The reason for this was that Hertfordshire County Council and Weston Way Nursery were unable to enter into negotiations. Public consultation had been invited with no result, and work would begin at October half term 2009 for 16 to 18 weeks.

Ms Colderwood explained that each Spurgeons Children's Centre was managed by an employee who had the qualifications (social care, health and early years) and experience required by a school head teacher. The Children's Centre would offer access to services for 0-4 year olds and also work in partnership with schools to help to improve children's achievement and life chances. The Centre offered the following:

- Good quality early years provision (10 hours per day, 5 days per week and 48 weeks per year)
- Support for all children and parents, including those with additional needs
- Parent support, including toy libraries, parent and toddler groups and parenting programmes
- A base for a childminding network and/or group
- Effective links with Jobcentre Plus, local training providers, further and higher education providers
- Services in local neighbourhoods and home visiting
- Child and family health services including antenatal services
- Local advice and information for parents
- High quality 'wraparound' childcare provided on the school site or through other local providers
- A varied menu of activities to be on offer, such as study support, sport, music, dance, drama and many more
- Parenting support, which included information support at key transition points, parenting programmes and family learning
- Wider community access to ICT, sports, art and adult learning
- Swift and easy referral to a wide range of specialist support systems, such as speech therapy, child and adolescent mental health services and intensive family support.

Sam Colderwood explained that Spurgeons worked both in the UK and abroad. In 1867 a Baptist preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, had opened his first orphanage in Stockwell, London and this had developed into one of the UK's largest Christian charities focused on helping children and young people who either live in a disadvantaged community, are from a marginalised group or are experiencing significant disruption in their lives.

She declared that throughout its history, Spurgeons had demonstrated a commitment to changing the lives of children and young people, previously through the care provided in their orphanages and recently by working in partnership with local authorities, local churches and other groups to provide a wide variety of vital services for children. Since 1992 Spurgeons had developed several international projects to help children in Eastern Europe, Africa and Central America, employing local staff to address the issue of poverty at a local level.

Spurgeons Vision was “to see a world where all children and young people have hope for their future, the ability to make choices and are excited about the opportunities before them.” The Core Values stated:

- We are caring
- We are inclusive
- We are holistic
- We are hopeful
- We are responsive and
- We are professional.

Sam Colderwood reminded the Committee of the invitation that they had received through Members’ Despatch to a stakeholders’ event at Baldock Community Centre from 12 noon to 2pm, at which lunch would be provided, and revealed that a manager for the Baldock Centre had been advertised for and an outreach worker had been recruited for venues in the town and surrounding villages, although a name had yet to be chosen for the Baldock children’s centre.

The Committee asked questions which Sam Colderwood answered, clarifying points such as the current source of funding (the Government), staff required for the centre and how the centre would be governed.

The Chairman thanked Sam Colderwood for her informative presentation, and requested that she keep the Baldock and District Committee in touch with progress made. He asked her if she would return to update the Committee in 6-8 months’ time, bringing with her the person who had been recruited as the manager of the Baldock Spurgeons Children’s Centre, to which she agreed.

10. SECTION 106 AGREEMENTS AND UNILATERAL UNDERTAKINGS UPDATE

The Planning Control and Conservation Manager (PCCM) thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee, and pointed out that presentation of the report had been changed, the object of which was to make it easier to understand.

She went through the appendices with the Committee, answering their questions on specific matters. The Committee were informed that income had reduced since November 2008, as a result of the economic situation and the consequent reduction in developments. Previous s106 Agreements had included a “spend by” date, but these were limited for the recent Agreements. The PCCM stated that all s106 Agreements and Unilateral Undertakings had now been recorded. She felt that the Planning Control Department had the role of collectors, and others should incorporate money into their strategy. The PCCM asked for feedback as to whether the new method of recording the s106s was easier to understand than the old one.

The PCCM was asked to explain, for the benefit of the public, exactly what a Section 106 Agreement was, and she informed them that these were agreements negotiated between local planning authorities and persons with an interest in a piece of land. These agreements were linked to planning permissions and aimed to mitigate the effect of the development within a community. These obligations could also be secured by developers through unilateral undertakings.

The Members discussed the report presented by the PCCM, and made suggestions and comments. It was stated that there should be a mechanism to collect the small amounts of money in order to ensure that it was of benefit to the community, and they asked what influence the Baldock and District Committee had on this (the PCCM explained that this was set out in Appendix E). It was suggested that projects in the villages needed to be accessed through the Community Development Officer (CDO)

and that it was vital that there was a clear audit trail to show that the funds were going back into those projects. It was suggested that the CDO ensured that the audit trail was regularly updated. **Action: CDO.** The Chairman agreed that this would be very welcome, and suggested that the CDO gave the Committee an update every 6 months, with the PCCM attending the Baldock and District Committee Meeting annually to inform the Committee of any changes which had taken place and those which were necessary in the future. The PCCM stated that at present there was no money outstanding for Baldock, and a Member commented that there were no dates of completion on the Highways chart (Appendix B). The Chairman recommended that the PCCM be asked to relate the Committee's concerns to Hertfordshire Highways, and the Committee agreed. The question of where sums of money can be spent was raised, and the PCCM confirmed that it was an Audit Commission ruling that they must be spent in the area already designated. Members sought clarification and asked if the same ruling applied to other areas, such as education or libraries etc.

The Chairman thanked the Planning Control and Conservation Manager for her efficient and comprehensive presentation of the report, and approved the manner in which it had been compiled.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Baldock and District Committee note the contents of the Section 106 Agreements and Unilateral Undertakings report;
- 2) That an update to the report is presented on an annual basis, when it would be debated by the Committee;
- 3) That the Community Development Officer give the Baldock and District Committee an update on Section 106 Agreements and Unilateral Undertakings every 6 months;
- 4) That it was vital that projects in rural areas and villages must be accessed through the Community Development Officer, with a clear audit trail to show that funds were going back into those projects;
- 5) That the Planning Control and Conservation Manager pass on the concerns of the Committee about the possible pay back of monies collected by Hertfordshire County Council;
- 6) That the Planning Control and Conservation Manager pass on the Committee's concerns regarding dates for completing projects to the relevant officer at Hertfordshire Highways;
- 7) That the Baldock and District Committee be presented with a further update at the meeting on 21 September 2009;
- 8) That the Baldock and District Committee approve the manner in which the report has been compiled and thank the Planning Control and Conservation Manager for her comprehensive presentation.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- 1) To ensure that there is a robust system for negotiating and managing Section 106/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.

11. BALDOCK TOWN CENTRE

The Chairman reminded the Baldock and District Committee that the Baldock Town Centre Manager's report would be included in the Community Development Officer's Champion News report.

12. BALDOCK TOWN CENTRE ENHANCEMENT UPDATE: INFORMATION NOTE

The Baldock and District Committee had previously received and studied the Information Note, and the Chairman asked the Members for their comments.

He suggested that instead of cars being ticketed for parking violations, the Car Parking Manager be requested to put warning notices onto cars for a period of one week. He suggested that parking enforcement commence from Monday 15 June 2009.

A Member of the Committee commented that representatives from Abbots had arrived to plan how the fair would be erected in October this year, and that there did not appear to be a problem.

The Community Development Officer declared that due to the value of the street furniture, any damage done to the paving would have to be refunded. A bond would be taken out by anyone holding an event in Baldock Town Centre who would, if necessary, sort it out with the stallholders concerned. She also reassured Members who were worried about any damage occurring to the grass verges by vehicles, rides or stalls.

RESOLVED:

That the Baldock and District Committee note the contents of this Information Note.

13. CHAMPION NEWS AND FINANCE REPORT 2009/2010

The Community Development Officer (CDO) for Baldock and District introduced a report of activities that had taken place since the last meeting on 30 March 2009.

She had given updates in her report on the progress towards:

Baldock Town Centre Celebration, to be held on Saturday 13 June 2009. The CDO gave a verbal schedule of the day, and stated that invited guests and contractors would be requested to meet at Zeus on Baldock High Street for a reception sponsored by BDP, the designers of the new Town Centre. Oliver Heald MP had agreed to cut the ribbon and declare the new Town Centre open, and the NHDC Chairman, Cllr David Miller, would attend and say a few words of introduction, followed by a prayer from a Baldock clergyman. The Chairman requested that thanks from the Baldock and District Committee be noted: to Hertfordshire Highways, to BDP and to the contractors Skanska, for their contributions to the Town Centre opening;

Baldock and District Youth Council, who had applied for a Big Boost funding bid for £17,000 to put on a Youth Festival in the Baldock Arena (formerly Baldock Football Club);

Old Wallington Road planting of spring bulbs was now complete;

50+ a cappella Singing Workshops saw 25 participants at Knights Templar School booked onto the course;

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra Concert at Knights Templar School involved GCSE A Level Music students attending three composition workshops with a professional composer and musicians. Music students from five secondary schools in the North Herts District performed their compositions at a concert with the RPO on 7 May 2009;

Baldock Cricket Club had been assisted by the CDO to apply for Grass Roots funding towards their project to set up activities on Saturday mornings for younger children;

Baldock Town Hall Group were in the process of reconstitution and preparation of a business plan for the operation of Baldock Town Hall. The Town Hall Arts Group would organise their events as an independent hirer. The CDO would feed back information on this to the next Committee Meeting on 20 July 2009;

The Highways Work Programme – Members were asked to examine this document at Appendix A of the report, and to propose schemes and projects to be included in the 2009-2010 JMP Discretionary Budget Programme. There was one match funded scheme on the programme, to which the Committee gave their full support: Station Road/Lucas Lane, Ashwell junction improvements. The Committee discussed the proposal for a dropped kerb in Bygrave Road, Baldock but it was decided that due to the need for a traffic island in the road at this location, this project should be deferred until further investigation into the cost had been made and funds had been committed. It was agreed in principle to inform the JMP that this was an area of concern. Members agreed to bring any particular schemes for referral to the JMP to a future Baldock and District Committee Meeting;

The CDO took the Committee through the spreadsheet at Appendix B showing the Budget 2009/2010 update;

Appendix C was the grant application from the Baldock Town Partnership for the sum of £1,800 to go towards funding costs of the Baldock Celebration Town Centre opening, which the Committee, after due consideration, agreed should be £1,500 split across all the Wards in the usual manner;

There were two additional fast track grants, to which the Members agreed - £200 to go to Ashwell Village Trust and £250 to Ashwell Mothers and Toddlers Group;

The CDO tabled another grant application from Friends of St Mary's Church, and Cllr Muir declared a personal interest, as he is a member of the Parochial Church Council. The Friends of St Mary's had asked for £2,000 to help with renovation of the church clock face, which would cost £11,000 in total, but the CDO recommended that Members consider granting £1,000, and after some discussion, the Members decided to grant £1,500 split between Baldock East and Baldock Town in the usual way.

The CDO took the Baldock and District Committee through Appendix D (the Area Committee Work Plan), which would be kept up to date to ensure that Members were kept fully advised of outstanding projects and schemes, including their start and completion dates, the budgets and review of progress.

The Chairman thanked the Community Development Officer for her efforts on behalf of the residents of Baldock.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Baldock and District Committee:
 - 1) Allocates £1,500 from Area Committee Discretionary Budgets for financial support towards the cost of hosting the Baldock Celebration official opening of the new Town Centre enhancements;
 - 2) Allocates the sum of £1,500 to the Friends of St Mary's Church to part fund renovations to the face of the church clock;
 - 3) Approves the following discretionary fast track grants:
 - i) £200 to Ashwell Village Trust for a children's seat in the village garden;
 - ii) £250 to Ashwell Mothers and Toddlers Group for 'messy play' equipment;
2. That the Baldock and District Committee note and support the proposed schemes/projects and narrative set out in Appendix D.
3. That the Committee endorses the actions taken by the Community Development Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being.

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

- 1) That the Committee offer their full support to the match funded junction improvements scheme at Station Road/Lucas lane, Ashwell;
- 2) That the North Hertfordshire Highways Partnership-Joint member Panel be informed that the Committee consider as an area of concern, the site of a dropped kerb on Bygrave Road, Baldock, which would also require a traffic island at that location;
- 3) That the Committee will bring any particular schemes for referral to the North Hertfordshire Highways Partnership-Joint member Panel, to a future Baldock and District Committee Meeting.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- 1) To ensure that the Committee are kept informed of the work of the Community Development Officer;
- 2) This report is intended simply to inform Members of the financial resources available to the Committee. It draws attention to the current budgetary situation, assists in the effective financial management of the Area Committee's budget and ensures actions are performed within the Authority's Financial Regulations and the guidance in the Grants Procedure;
- 3) The awarding of financial assistance to voluntary organisations and the use of discretionary spending allows the Committee to further the aims and Strategic Objectives of the Council;
- 4) The allocation of funds will improve the services provided by local organisations and groups that are available and accessed by members of the community.

14. GRANT APPLICATION – BALDOCK TOWN HALL PARTNERSHIP

Baldock Town Partnership requested the sum of £1,800 to go towards funding costs of the Baldock Celebration Town Centre opening. The Committee, after due consideration, agreed to award £1,500 split across all the Wards in the usual manner.

RESOLVED: That the sum of £1,500 be allocated to the Baldock Town Hall Partnership to help fund the Baldock Celebration Town Centre Opening.

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 – FRIENDS OF ST MARY'S CHURCH

Cllr Muir declared a personal interest in this grant application as he is a member of the Parochial Church Council.

Friends of St Mary's Church requested the sum of £2,000 to part fund renovations to the face of the church clock. The Committee agreed to award £1,500, split between the Wards of Baldock Town and Baldock East in the usual manner.

RESOLVED: That the sum of £1,500 be allocated to the Friends of St Mary's Church to part fund renovation of the church clock face.

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 9.15p.m.

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Chairman