

**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 20 July 2009 at 7.30 p.m.**

**MINUTES**

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

**IN ATTENDANCE:** *Cllr Tom Brindley (Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport)  
Simon Young (Transport Policy Officer)  
Claire Morgan (Community Development Officer)  
Susanne Gow (Committee and Member Services Officer).*

**ALSO PRESENT:** *Nigel Cooke – Baldock Town Centre Manager*

**16. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Cllr S.K. Jarvis tendered his apologies for absence.

**17. MINUTES – 8 JUNE 2009**

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 8 June 2009 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

**18. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS**

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

**19. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

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

He welcomed in particular the NHDC Transport Policy Officer who would be presenting the NHDC Draft Parking Strategy, which had been presented to Cabinet on 23 June 2009, and was now coming to Area Committees for their views and suggestions, together with Cllr Tom Brindley, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport; and Nigel Cooke, Baldock Town Centre Manager.

The Chairman 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.

**20. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

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

**21. NHDC DRAFT PARKING STRATEGY**

The Transport Policy Officer (TPO) presented the report of the Strategic Director of Planning, Housing and Enterprise. The new Draft Parking Strategy and associated report had gone before Cabinet on 23 June 2009, and the Baldock and District Committee and the other Area Committees were now being asked for their views on the new Draft Strategy, prior to Cabinet considering it in more detail at the next meeting on 8 September 2009.

The TPO explained that the Draft Parking Strategy had been influenced by the Financial Services Review (FSR) held in 2008, and that the intention was to introduce flexibility. Once the Strategy had been adopted, an Action Plan would be produced, split into town centres/elsewhere. He ran through Policies 1-23 in Appendix 1,

covering Management and Resources; Off Street Car Park Capacity; Physical Improvements to Car Parks; Car Park Management System; Reviewing Tariffs (every 5 years was suggested, depending on the durability of the ticket machines used); Charging for Evenings and Sunday (not done in North Herts); Other Services in Council Car Parks; On Street Parking Provision; On Street Charging; Key Issues to Consider; Parking for Blue Badge Holders; Servicing and Loading; Emergency Services' Access; Powered Two Wheeler and Bicycle Parking; Bus, Coach and HGV Parking in Town Centres; Updating Traffic Regulation Orders; Identifying On Street Parking Problem Areas; Identifying Solutions to On Street Parking Problems; Consultation; Future Parking Control Areas; Small Scale Parking Improvements; Review of Existing Controlled Parking Zones; Blue Badge Holder Parking Bays; and New Developments and Existing Controlled Parking Zones. The TPO advised that an open mind should be kept for Policies 16-18.

He then stated that the Strategy had been drafted for Cabinet, but there were some obvious omissions, such as no Park and Ride Schemes (for the Urban Transport Plan) and no reference to taxis as well as the need to strengthen links to the Town Centre Strategies. He asked Members to consider the draft Parking Strategy and to let him have their comments.

The Chairman commented that the main item specific to Baldock was the Town Centre enhancement, and the TPO declared that with the impact of the changes that had been made to car parking including long term parking, it would take at least six months for everything to settle down. The traditional car park in the Twitchell was still in use, and tariffs for a short stay could be considered.

One Member commented that cars that had formerly been in the town centre now appeared to use side roads for parking, and that many residents had complained about increased commuter parking outside their homes. The complaints came from such roads as Norton Way, Icknield Way, Larkins Close, Bygrave Road and Salisbury Road.

The Committee then discussed whether to start charging for car parking in 2010, but decided that it would be better to start in 2011. It was stated that Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs) should be installed before starting to charge for parking only in the Twitchell car park, as more cars now appeared to be parking on the roads.

An agreement was reached that the Strategy would be implemented for a town that is "different", and that Baldock must be looked at separately so that it was not affected adversely.

The Chairman declared that it was crucial that the impact of the Town Centre enhancement was not ruined, and that the draft Car Parking Strategy did not have a detrimental effect, but was "dovetailed" in appropriately. It had already been publicly stated that six to eight months after the Baldock Town Centre Enhancement a review of the changes made would be carried out, and this must take place. If things went wrong, it could "kill off" Baldock, so all the development had to be tied in to get the overall impact.

Discussion ensued on the time frame for implementation of the CPZs and Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) and also for costing of the Car Parking Strategy and the Committee were informed that costs have to be put together for September – the circumstances were different for each town in North Herts.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport, on being invited by the Chairman to speak, stated that the Car Parking Strategy would be reviewed every five years and the key criteria was to implement a holistic and flexible strategy, appropriate for the district. The Strategy was an "enabler", and would be applied individually, implementing what was best for each area. He suggested that the Committee study the Policies in the draft Car Parking Strategy to help them decide what is best for Baldock and gave his opinion that Baldock was in the enviable position of being able to learn from other towns' mistakes. He continued by declaring that it was vital that Baldock maximises the return on their assets (their car parks), as money made from

car parking machines could be reinvested in town centres. It was essential that what is best for people is looked at and that the best use is made of investments.

The Transport Policy Officer (TPO) commented on car parking in Baldock, stating that prime car parking space is 2hr, and in other towns this type of parking is typically 1 hour or 30 mins. Local traders may, in time, want 1hr to accommodate their customers which could sit more logically with a short/medium stay tariff in The Twitchell. The Tesco car park is totally different and outside of NHDC's control but provides short and long stay parking at no cost, so its influence cannot be underestimated. CPZs could also result in car parking displacing to other areas as was the experience in other towns. He continued, saying that information from an annual review of car parking charges would yield useful information.

The Chairman commented that trucks and HGVs appear to be using long stay areas to park overnight, and this should be discouraged.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport concluded by stating that the NHDC Car Parking Strategy must work for all towns and all residents, traders and visitors in North Herts, however varied or similar they were.

The Chairman thanked the Transport Policy Officer for his informative presentation and once again thanked the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport for attending the Baldock and District Committee Meeting and giving clarification on several points.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the Baldock and District Committee consider the Draft Parking Strategy and refer any comments on it to Cabinet for its consideration in September 2009;
- 2) That Members provide the Transport Policy Officer with any parking issues they wish to see included in the forthcoming Action Plan;
- 3) That the Baldock and District Committee support the proposals outlined in the draft Parking Strategy.

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 1) Cabinet has requested the views of the Area Committees on the draft Parking Strategy;
- 2) In order to ensure that any Action Plan resulting from the draft Parking Strategy is informed by as much local knowledge as possible.

**22. BALDOCK TOWN CENTRE MANAGER**

Nigel Cooke, the Baldock Town Centre Manager (TCM), addressed the Committee, and updated them on the duties of his post and the activities with which he had recently been involved.

He explained that he had been appointed in March 2009 by the Baldock Town Centre Partnership to work one day per week, and had found the role a steep learning curve. To date, Baldock had held:

- A French Market in April for the first time, and it had drawn people into Baldock to see Baldock town centre;
- The Baldock Celebration on 13 June, comprising the actual ceremony at the war memorial and many fun and free activities throughout the day, in the area of Whitehorse Street/High Street sponsored by North Herts District Council, the Baldock and District Committee and Skanska. The TCM had received many positive comments from the general public, and had been asked if this could be an annual occurrence.

He explained that there were plans for a British Farmers' Market and a Christmas Market, with the intention of inviting the French Market to return. The local Town Centre Managers regularly met together to discuss plans and co-ordinate events, and

he had found this invaluable with his search for additional funding and sponsorship for better events. He believed that local businesses should be made aware of what was going on in Baldock.

The TCM explained that part of his role was to obtain funding, and he was keen to plan a schedule of market, but needed legal advice from North Herts District Council. He found just one day a week was not enough time to put in all the work that he considered should be brought to his role. Much of 2009 had been taken up with parking and other such problems and this had prevented him achieving as much as he had wished.

One Committee Member asked whether a schedule or a business plan had already been created, and stressed that this should be done as soon as possible, as making plans, circulating and finalising the plans and publicising them all took time, and that planning for Christmas should be taking place right now.

A suggestion was made that leaflets on the attractions available in Baldock and the other towns in North Herts District should be prepared and circulated, as this may attract visitors from London and the North to the countryside and activities in Hertfordshire. The Committee agreed that this was a good idea.

The TCM stated that he would prepare a schedule of events as soon as possible together with a business plan to put it into action, referring to the Baldock and District Committee and the NHDC Legal Department for help when required. It was also suggested that local schools should be involved, to bring in assistance from the pupils' parents. It was thought that this would help to drive matters forward, especially if local businesses were also involved.

It was agreed that a simple draft Business Plan should be prepared, and put before the Baldock Town Centre Partnership for comment. It was suggested that an Events Committee should be formed, but the decision was made that this would be an extra "tier" to run a small town, which would not be appropriate. Discussion followed on the involvement of Tesco in Baldock events, and it was not thought that they were particularly interested in promoting Baldock as an attractive focus for visitors to North Herts, but were currently concentrating on expanding their site, having recently been granted planning permission.

The Baldock TCM thanked the Committee for their support, and also the CDO for her assistance with the Baldock Celebration.

The Chairman thanked the Baldock Town Centre Manager for his informative presentation, and for his hard work on behalf of the residents of Baldock, which was very much appreciated. He assured the TCM that the Committee would lend their support with any problems he encountered in planning future events and putting together a Business Plan for future activities in Baldock.

## **23. 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 8 June 2009. She had nothing to add to her published report, other than the information that in at least two locations the road was being dug up and black tarmac was being used when the holes were filled in, ruining the carefully chosen beige gravel which had been laid down during the Baldock Town Centre Enhancement works, completed just three months ago.

The CDO had given updates in her report on the progress towards:

Baldock Town Centre Celebration, which had taken place on 13 June 2009.

Baldock and District Youth Council, who had co-ordinated the 'Baldock's Got Talent' competition taking place at Knights Templar School and in the Youth Centre in Simpson Drive. Winners and runners up will be invited to perform at the Bfestival planned for 5 September at the Baldock Arena.

Village of the Year Competition North was won by Ashwell. Ashwell was one of five entrants in North Herts District to take part this year, and will now automatically be entered into the regional awards scheme and if successful, go on to the national awards. The trophy 'Totem Pole' would be displayed prominently in Ashwell for a year once the NHDC Chairman, Cllr David Miller, had awarded it to Ashwell on 18 July 2009. The CDO commented that the Members for Weston and Arbury Wards had between them funded the first year of this competition, and asked whether they would consider funding Years 2 and 3 between them, at a cost of £150 p.a. – therefore £75 p.a. each. This was agreed.

Ashwell Cycle Club were in the process of securing funding for secure equipment storage and more grass track cycles for younger children, assisted by NHDC officers. The Ward Member for Arbury had provisionally indicated financial support via the Ward Discretionary Grant Budget, and had asked CDOs to search for other possible sources of external funding for this project. The comment was made by a Member that Ashwell Cycle Club had become so successful that it was probable that they would require larger premises in the future.

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

Grant application forms for considerations were attached: £300 for Christchurch Baldock for a holiday play scheme as Appendix B. The Committee stated that this project was not ongoing, but that they were happy to lend their support on this occasion, with the usual split between Baldock East and Baldock Town ;

Ashwell Cycle Club at Appendix C required £1,500 for equipment, and the Committee decided to award them the sum of £500 for the purchase of secure storage and for grass track cycles for younger children.

The updated Area Committee Work Programme was included as Appendix D, for Members' comments.

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) Notes the budgetary expenditure, balances and carry forwards from the Development Budgets;
  - 2) Awards the sum of £300 to Christchurch Baldock as support funding associated to the delivery of a 5-day holiday play scheme;
  - 3) Approves the grant of £500 to Ashwell Cycle Club for secure storage and additional grass track cycles;
  - 4) Notes and supports the proposed schemes/projects and narrative set out in Appendix D;
  - 5) Endorses the actions taken by the Community Development Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being.

- 24. GRANT APPLICATION – CHRISTCHURCH BALDOCK – HOLIDAY PLAY SCHEME**  
Christchurch Baldock requested the sum of £300 towards funding costs of a 5-day holiday play scheme (3-7 August 2009) for children aged between 5 and 14 years old, based at Knights Templar School.

**RESOLVED:** That the sum of £300 be allocated to Christchurch Baldock to help fund their 5-day holiday play scheme.

**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.

**25. GRANT APPLICATION – ASHWELL CYCLE CLUB**

The Committee awarded the sum of £500 to part fund the purchase of grass track cycles for young children and the supply of secure storage in which to keep them.

**RESOLVED:** That the sum of £500 be allocated to Ashwell Cycle Club to help fund purchase of secure storage and further grass track cycles for younger members of Ashwell Cycle Club.

**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