

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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

**Meeting held in St Mary's Church Hall, Church Street, Baldock
on 21 September 2009 at 7.30 p.m.**

MINUTES

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

IN ATTENDANCE: *Lynn Saville (Head of Cultural and Community Services)
Steve Geach (Parks and Countryside Development Manager)
Claire Morgan (Community Development Officer)
Susanne Gow (Committee and Member Services Officer).*

ALSO PRESENT: *6 members of the public.*

26. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors S. K. Jarvis and A. D. Young.

27. MINUTES –20 JULY 2009

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 July 2009 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

28. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

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

29. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

He informed those present that for the foreseeable future, Baldock and District Committee Meetings would be held in St Mary's Church Hall, instead of Baldock Community Centre, as the Centre had a weekly, and more lucrative booking, for Monday evenings.

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.

30. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr Vic Blickem addressed the Committee on the subject of Pedestrian Safety at The Barns, Weston Way, Baldock.

He stated that his role was as Visiting Advocate to The Barns, a residential children's home at New Farm, next to Brandles School, Weston Way, Baldock. Mr Blickem explained that he was employed by Voice, who have a contract with, and are supported by, Herts County Council to provide an Advocacy Service to Looked After Children (LAC) between the ages of 11 and 16 years.

Mr Blickem asked for the Committee's help, as the road outside The Barns, Weston Way, was very dangerous to cross, there being no pedestrian crossing nearby and the footpath petered out in the direction of the nearest crossing outside Knights Templar School. To walk into the centre of Baldock or to the nearest shops, the young people had to dash across the road between passing vehicles, an act which had been described by the manager of Baldock Day Services, who shared the site with The Barns, as "precarious". Mr Blickem explained that the views of the young people were supported by Granta Housing, as well as Baldock Day Services. He stated that Adrian Redrup of Herts County Council (HCC), together with Cllrs Ian Knighton and Michael Muir of the Baldock and District Committee, were extremely concerned at the flow and speed of passing traffic on Weston Way.

The Chairman explained to Mr Blickem that the Committee had a small amount of funds available to highways issues, but that it was possible for the matter to be referred to the North Herts Highways Panel-Joint Member Panel (NHHP-JMP) for additional funds, subject to a financial contribution from the Baldock and District Committee.

The Committee discussed the problem, pointing out that although they had every sympathy with the plight of the residents of The Barns, to install a pedestrian crossing (the cost of which could be £30,000) on Weston Way outside the residential home would mean that there would be two road crossings within a short distance of each other. It was suggested that this problem was referred to the NHHP-JMP, although the Committee was reminded that it was a firm ruling of the Panel that nothing would be progressed without a 50% contribution from the Baldock and District Committee – and the Committee's annual highways budget was less than the £15,000 required for this one project.

The Chairman proposed, and the Committee agreed, that an appropriate officer be asked to write to John Harris, in the Herts County Council's Children, Schools and Families department to ask what could be done regarding safety in the area. **Action: SG - completed.**

The Chairman thanked Mr Blickem for bringing the matter to the Committee's attention and assured him that the Committee would do everything they could to solve the problem of safety on Weston Way, Baldock, outside The Barns.

31. BFESTIVAL, 26 SEPTEMBER 2009

Gary Leask, Area Youth Team Leader, and Mark Batt, a member of the Baldock Youth Council, addressed the Committee on the forthcoming BFestival, to be held at the Baldock Arena on 26 September 2009. They declared that the Youth Council had taken the decision to stage an event for local young people, and had held auditions for singers, dancers and bands.

The festival would consist of music, dance, sport (five-a-side football), activities and stalls. Information and food stalls would be there, as would Baldock Youth Club, the Fitness Centre at Knights Templar School and the Health Bus and the event would take place at the Baldock Arena, which was formerly the Baldock Football Club ground, from 2pm to 10pm. Singers and dancers would perform during the afternoon and the bands would play during the evening. Hitchin Town Youth FC, Letchworth Youth FC and Baldock Town FC would all field teams for the 5-a-side tournaments. A bus and driver had been engaged to visit the villages surrounding Baldock throughout the day to collect and deliver back any young people who wished to attend the event. The entrance fee was £5 per ticket.

The Chairman declared that some of the Members of the Baldock and District Committee had been involved at the inception of the Youth Council and asked whether they had covered all costs incurred. On being told that there was £757.00 still outstanding to cover the cost of traffic management, the Committee agreed to cover this cost, subject to the agreement of the absent Members, splitting the sum between all Wards. The Community Development Officer (CDO) would arrange for the submission of a grant application to cover the sum required.

The Chairman thanked Gary and Mark for their informative presentation, and asked them to keep the Baldock and District Committee updated with the progress and success of the BFestival.

32. INTERIM GREEN SPACE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE

The Parks and Countryside Development Manager (PCDM) addressed the Committee and reminded them that the Interim Green Space Strategy and its associated Action Plans had been brought before them for their comments, and it would then be taken back to the meeting of Cabinet on 20 October 2009. He explained that formerly there had been separate strategies for Cemeteries, Trees, Outdoor Play Facilities, Allotments and Outdoor Sports Facilities, but this had been replaced with one Green Space Management Strategy with associated Action Plans for the separate areas.

He asked Members to give him their opinions at the meeting, or later in the week by telephone or email, so that he could collate all the responses ready to present to Cabinet on 20 October 2009.

The Committee discussed the Interim Green Space Strategy, commenting on the lack of land in Baldock for play areas and football pitches for Baldock's 39 teams; the fact that Baldock Arena is currently used by football teams from other towns; extending land for allotments in conjunction with the Allotments Association (including work to rabbit-proof and vandal-proof the allotments).

The PCDM stated that he expected levels of provision to be set as part of the Local Development Framework and to address deficiencies. He also informed the Committee that it was hoped that additional funds and Section 106 monies for improvements could be found for this purpose.

The Committee were informed that a Sports Facility Review was currently being undertaken within the District.

The Chairman thanked the Parks and Countryside Development Manager for his informative clarification, and summarised that the Baldock and District Committee would like a strong feedback on the search for land for play areas and sports pitches in Baldock and the surrounding district.

The PCDM asked the Committee to let him have any further comments by letter, telephone or email before 20 October 2009, when he would present his findings from Area Committees to Cabinet.

33. HITCHIN TOWN HALL MUSEUM FEASIBILITY STUDY – UPDATE ON PROGRESS

The Head of Cultural and Community Services (HCCS) presented the Feasibility Study to the Baldock and District Committee, and stated that this was an interim report to advise the Committee of how the proposed museum would look and function when completed, and the facilities it would contain. She referred the Committee to the Options Appraisal Report and the plans it contained.

The HCCS drew the Committee's attention to the options of:

- Retaining the gymnasium/hall with the toilets, store, shop, café and kitchen;
- Installing a sprung floor in the gymnasium;
- Installing a shower facility in the toilets;
- Not using the front entrance, but the access down the side of the building;
- The Lucas Room having an Education suite;

The Baldock and District Committee discussed the report, and commented on the modern day community use of museums; the impression that the space contained in Hitchin Town Hall is greater than both Hitchin Museum and Letchworth Museum combined.

The Chairman stated that having a Museum for North Hertfordshire should be important to the whole of the District, instead of each town having their own smaller museum.

He thanked the HCCS for providing the comprehensive report and update.

RESOLVED: That the Baldock and District Committee note the works to produce the Feasibility Study in line with the published brief, the process by which the Study findings will be reported and considered, and the process for consideration and agreement of any actions arising from the conclusion of the Study by various NHDC committees.

REASON FOR DECISION:

- 1) To ensure that Members are kept advised on progress on the works relating to this important community facility;
- 2) To ensure that the process by which the consideration of the Feasibility Study, and any action arising, is clearly set out and understood.

34. INFORMATION NOTE: BALDOCK TOWN CENTRE – POST ENHANCEMENT SCHEME REVIEW

The Projects Manager, Planning Services had prepared an Information Note on the Town Centre Post Enhancement Review for the Baldock and District Committee. The Information Note ran through the process of reviewing the enhancement scheme, including the North Herts District Council Parking Strategy 2009-2019 adopted by Cabinet on 8 September 2009. The full Report would be available in March 2010.

The Information Note included an indicative work programme leading up to the Review Report and the Committee noted the contents as requested.

35. 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 20 July 2009.

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

Baldock Town Centre Partnership, which had held its Annual General Meeting on 7 September 2009. There would be changes to the Board of Directors, as a new Chairman and several more directors had been appointed.

Baldock and District Youth Council, who were organising the Bfestival, consisting of: live music from local bands, information stalls, on-site attractions, a football tournament and performances from the finalists of the 'Baldock's Got Talent' competition.

Baldock Charter Fair, which will take place on the weekend of 2/3/4 October 2009.

Baldock Town Hall, which would not now become an Arts Centre, but could become a base for the Town Centre Manager, and be hired out for different events and specialist markets. An expression of interest has been made, and an outline business plan will shortly be put forward.

Youth Wing, Baldock Community Centre, which was in need of enhancement.

Rushden and Wallington Parish Council, who had requested a 50% contribution to the installation of dog bins in the village. The Ward Member for Weston and Sandon had agreed to provide financial support for these.

Parking Issues at the Junction of South Road and Pembroke Road, for which an Information Note had been provided at Appendix A, giving three options for resolution of the problem. After discussion the Committee agreed that the first resort in attempting to resolve this problem should be laying down and enforcing yellow lines in the area, especially during the evenings. If this did not work, then the Committee would consider the installation of bollards.

It was proposed that the Chairman should be delegated to re-cost for 4/5 wooden bollards and a recommendation be forwarded to Hertfordshire Highways for funding.

Highways Work Programme, which had not been updated, and therefore was not appended.

Area Committee Work Programme, was attached for Members' comments at Appendix B.

The CDO took the Committee through the spreadsheet at Appendix C, showing the Budget 2009/2010 update and the Committee agreed to fast track a grant to assist with funding the BFestival on 26 September 2009.

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) Agreed to fast track the sum of £757 to help fund the Baldock Youth Council's BFestival, shared across the Wards in the usual manner, subject to agreement from Cllr Jarvis and Cllr Young;
 - 2) Endorses the actions taken by the Community Development Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being for the Baldock and District area.

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 9.00p.m.

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Chairman