

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 16 November 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 and Conservation Manager)
Tim Neill (Accountancy Manager)*

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

ALSO PRESENT: *5 members of the public.*

36. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor A. D. Young.

37. MINUTES – 21 SEPTEMBER 2009

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 September 2009 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

38. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

The Committee Member for Baldock East raised the matter of a crossing with dropped kerbs on Bygrave Road. She was informed that this would be discussed later on the Agenda.

39. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

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.

40. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. The Rev. Andrew Holford addressed the Baldock and District Committee with regard to a grant submitted for approval to help with the cost of a full-time youth worker appointment, to be shared with St Mary's Church, Ashwell. The objective was to provide support and activities for young people in the district between the ages of 10 and 18 years. Rev. Holford explained that the plan was to divide the youth worker's time between Baldock 40% and Ashwell 40%, as well as covering another project one day a week in an area of the community not usually contacted (e.g. the elderly, ethnic minorities). This would be of great value, and allow local young people to support a disadvantaged group within the locality. Rev. Holford revealed that the budget is £30,000 for the first year, with an additional 10% to be added each year thereafter. He stated that he hoped the Baldock and District Committee would support this through allocation of funds.

The Committee discussed this presentation, raising concerns as to whether the proposed youth worker would integrate with Youth Connexions in the Baldock area (would be expected to integrate and give valuable input); where the remainder of the funding of the youth worker could be obtained (one source is Funding for Travel, which funds all children to attend breakfast clubs); allowing some of the young people to assist with fundraising (with adult assistance); the careful choice of the youth worker, as this age group covers the difficult transition from primary to secondary school; the location at which the youth worker would be based (in an office on church property in both Baldock and Ashwell, as well as being expected to work from home); how robust the long-term funding was (fixed term to begin with and the sincere hope that the project self-generates, plus funding from the diocese and Merchant Taylors); would the youth worker's remit cover just Baldock, Ashwell and Bygrave (yes to begin with, but other villages would be asked if they wanted to join in).

The Chairman thanked the Rev. Holford for his useful presentation, and informed him that the Baldock and District Committee would discuss and take a decision on the relevant grant application later in the Meeting.

2. Mr Richard Grant addressed the Committee on behalf of Wallington Village Hall, and thanked them for previous grants which had been very useful in renovating the Village Hall. He confirmed that Wallington Village Hall was the only place in the area to hold activities, such as Mothers and Toddlers Club, dancing clubs and foreign language groups etc and for parties and celebrations to take place. Awards for All had given £840 of the £1,680 needed for the redecoration of the kitchen and hall, and Mr Grant would ask the Baldock and District Committee to contribute the rest.

He informed the Committee that the hall floor also desperately needed refurbishment, and this would cost another £675. He pointed out that Wallington Village Hall fulfilled an important function in the village.

The Chairman thanked Mr Grant for his presentation, and confirmed that the grant application would be discussed and a decision made, later in the Committee Meeting.

41. CORPORATE BUSINESS PLANNING 2010-2011 – EFFICIENCIES AND INVESTMENTS

The Accountancy Manager (AM) presented the report of the Strategic Director of Finance, Policy and Governance. He stated that he would like the views of the Area Committees, including Baldock, to put before Cabinet at its next meeting on 15 December 2009. The AM declared that there was approximately a £1M of efficiency target in future years to balance the budget and allow for continued investment in the Council's priorities. The AM also noted that there may be subsequent changes to estimates before the December Cabinet report and that there may well be additional challenges if Government funding was to be reduced in future years. He explained that the Planning Projects Manager (PPM) had agreed to attend the Baldock and District Committee Meeting to provide any clarification that Members may require on the parking proposals. The AM took Members through the Appendices to the Report and offered to answer any queries that may arise from the report.

The Committee discussed the proposals and made comments which will be included in the December Cabinet report. In particular, the Committee felt that although it was right to consider charging for the Twitchell car park in Baldock in the future (R10), it was not the right time to do so, given all the recent disruption during the town centre enhancement. Consideration should be given to delay this proposal for a year.

The Committee questioned the PPM on problems arising post-enhancement in Baldock Town Centre. She declared that there had been comments on the lack of light in Hitchin Street which related to the Herts County Council (HCC) standard of lighting. They were happy with the lighting levels, but the PPM offered to discuss this matter with them and bring this back as part of a report in March 2010.

Regarding the black tarmac repair to the previously refurbished pavement in Hitchin Street, the PPM stated that HCC had given assurances that this would be repaired to a high standard, but a time had not yet been fixed for the work to be carried out. The PPM would come back to a future Baldock and District Committee meeting with a report on this matter. The possibility of hanging baskets being suspended from the new lamp posts was suggested, but the PPM revealed that extra brackets would be required at some cost.

The Chairman and the Committee then commented on the Baldock Town Centre Enhancement Scheme winning the 'Horticulture Week' magazine's annual award for the Best Commercial Project in Horticulture, Landscape and Amenity for 2009. They congratulated the PPM, who had collected the Award on behalf of North Herts District Council and the designers, BDP. She stated that the Scheme was also submitted for a Civic Trust Award, and the Chairman declared that the Award was the reflection of a good scheme and hard work.

RESOLVED: That the comments and views of the Baldock and District Committee be included by the Accountancy Manager in his report to Cabinet on 15 December 2009.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

- 1) To ensure that all relevant committees and groups are consulted on the proposed efficiency and investment proposals and afforded the opportunity to comment before Cabinet sets the draft budget in December 2009;
- 2) To ensure that the Council is able to adjust its base expenditure downwards to narrow the gap between the 2010/2011 District Requirement figure, as adjusted for anticipated capping limits and the Service spending requirements.

42. SECTION 106 AGREEMENTS AND UNILATERAL UNDERTAKINGS

The Planning Control and Conservation Manager (PCCM) introduced the report of the Head of Development and Building Control, which provided the Committee with an update on the comprehensive details of the current Section 106 Agreements and Unilateral Undertakings in its area, as at 30 October 2009 for NHDC.

She referred to the chart set out at Paragraph 4.6 of the report, which showed the overall income levels associated with Section 106 monies for NHDC since 2001/02. The downward trend for 2009/10 was primarily due to the current national economic situation, which had also resulted in increased officer time spent in negotiations with developers over Section 106 contributions.

The PCCM tabled some updated information concerning County Council Section 106 monies.

She stated that a new NHDC Corporate Officer Group had been formed (comprising herself and officers from the NHDC departments most involved in Section 106 Agreements), which she hoped would be useful in moving forward appropriate schemes for expenditure of the Section 106 monies.

She also explained that the report involved a higher level of negotiations due to the current economic climate; that NHDC were currently negotiating terms with their debtors; that a corporate group of service managers had been formalised; that Herts County Council (HCC) had formalised a method of fund allocation; that strategies (including the Green Space Management Strategy) were in the process of being finalised; and that there would be a levy on any developments – more information on this would follow in the first quarter of 2010.

The PCCM reminded Members that there was always concern about small amounts of money which may have been overlooked and could end up being lost to the Area Committee's budgets. She then took Members through the revised Appendix C which she had tabled at the Meeting, updating them that:

- The figure under the Amount Received heading for Application 01/00370/1 is £56,569.98;

- The figure under the Amount Received heading for 06/00335/1 is £12,066.00;
- The figure under the Amount Received for 06/00335/1 Library contribution is £3,200.00;
- The figure under the Amount Due heading for 08/02230/1 will be **either** £76,645.00 **or** £87,148.00 and will be implemented by the developers.

Discussion ensued and the Chairman remarked that as Section 106 monies were linked to a particular area they must be spent there. As a result, an undertaking should be given by from Herts County Council (HCC) that a large part of the money would be spent locally, whether on it be on schools, roadways etc. The PCCM responded that she will pursue this and attempt to get firmer comments from HCC. The Committee raised several points for clarification, and in answer the PCCM responded that she would chase payment of the sum owed on the Tower Clothiers sites in Weston, but Obligations and Unilateral Undertakings had been separated and it was hoped that the Corporate Group would help. She informed the Committee there must be an audit trail for the SPD which satisfied five tests, although it was hard to set this up "after the fact". Members were also reminded that money owed could be put towards additional facilities for parks and open spaces, including play equipment. She informed the Committee that some Section 106 Agreements have a "spend by" date, and some older S106 Agreements do not.

The matter of a crossing with dropped kerbs and an island on Bygrave Road was again raised by the Member for Baldock East (see Minute 38 above), and she revealed that a zebra crossing had been proposed at this location, which was not what had been requested. The PCCM was asked to obtain further clarification and a budget cost as soon as possible, and bring this back to the Baldock and District Committee at a meeting in the near future.

The Chairman thanked the Planning Control and Conservation Manager for presenting the report on the Section 106 Agreements and for her valuable assistance and efforts on behalf of the Baldock and District Committee.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the contents of the report be noted;
- 2) That as Section 106 monies were linked to a particular area they must be spent locally;
- 3) That a Section 106 Agreement/Unilateral Undertakings report be presented to the Committee on an annual basis;
- 4) That the Planning Control and Conservation Manager obtain clarification and a budget cost for a crossing with dropped kerbs and an island on Bygrave Road and bring this back to the Committee in the near future.

REASON FOR DECISIONS:

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

43. 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 21 September 2009.

She reported that the BFestival, a youth event held in Baldock in September, had been universally considered a great success, although considerably more support would be required if this was to be an annual event, as had been suggested. The Chairman thanked the Community Development Officer, Youth Connexions and the Baldock Youth Council for planning and organising this event.

The CDO gave further updates on her published report, as follows:

Baldock Town Centre Partnership

The current Baldock Town Centre Manager would be leaving in December, and recruitment was in hand to replace him as soon as possible.

Baldock Fair

Quotations were still awaited from the NHDC Waste Management section for cleaning up the spillage of oil on pavement surfaces, resulting from the Baldock Fair.

Baldock Youth Wing

Regarding the feasibility study proposed for development of the new Youth Wing at the Baldock Community Centre, it was suggested that more use could be made of the new Wing during the day. The whole building would also need upgrading to provide an outside area and disabled access.

The CDO took the Baldock District Committee through the budget spreadsheet at Appendix A, then the Highways Work Programme at Appendix B. This contained two items – the A505 junction with Station Road at Odsey which was likely to begin shortly, and junction of Station Road and Lucas Lane in Ashwell, which was currently awaiting confirmation of funding from the North Herts Highways Partnership-Joint Member Panel. Members considered the Area Committee Work Programme at Appendix C, then considered at Appendix D, the grant application for provision of a youth worker for Baldock and Ashwell, which had been put forward by Rev. Andrew Holford on behalf of St Mary's Church Baldock and St Mary's Church, Ashwell in Public Participation (Minute 40 herewith). The funding for the youth worker was conditional in that it would not be used to fund salaries and that details of the enabling items/works for which the funding was requested, once identified, be notified to Baldock and District Committee before funding was released. Councillor Michael Muir declared a personal interest in this grant application, as he was a member of St Mary's Church Council, Baldock. The grant application was agreed on the condition that provision of funds was split between Baldock Town and Baldock East, with a contribution from Arbury Ward, on which Councillor Young would be consulted.

Finally, the Committee considered the grant application for Wallington Village Hall at Appendix E, on which Mr Richard Grant had spoken during Public Participation (also at Minute 40). After some discussion, it was agreed that the sum requested for redecoration of the hall and kitchen should be awarded, and that a representative of Wallington Village Hall be asked to return to the Committee when they required further funding towards refurbishment of the Village Hall flooring.

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

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the budgetary expenditure, balances and carry forwards from the Development Budgets be noted;
- 2) That the actions taken by the Community Development Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being for the Baldock and District area be endorsed.

REASON FOR DECISIONS:

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.

44. GRANT APPLICATION – ST MARY'S CHURCH BALDOCK AND ST MARY'S CHURCH, ASHWELL

Councillor Michael Muir declared a personal interest in this grant application, as he was a member of St Mary's Church Council, Baldock.

The Committee agreed to award the sum of £2,000 to part fund the provision of a youth worker based at St Mary's Church Baldock and St Mary's Church, Ashwell. This sum was to be split between Baldock Town and Baldock East Wards, and was subject to a contribution from Arbury Ward. The Committee requested that this grant would not be used to fund salaries and that details of the enabling items/works for which the funding was requested, once identified, be notified to the Committee before funding was released.

RESOLVED: That the sum of £2,000 be allocated to St Mary's Church² to help fund the provision of a youth worker to cover both Baldock and Ashwell, with the condition that it would not be used to fund salaries and that once details of the enabling items/works for which the funding was requested had been identified, the Committee be notified.

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 – WALLINGTON VILLAGE HALL

Further to a Public Participation presentation by Mr Richard Grant and discussion by the Committee, the sum of £840 was awarded to Wallington Village Hall to assist with funding of redecoration of the hall and kitchen. It was agreed that further funds for renewing the flooring would be subject to a separate grant application in the future.

RESOLVED: That the sum of £840 be allocated to Wallington Village Hall to help fund redecoration of the hall and kitchen.

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