

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

LETCHWORTH COMMITTEE

**Meeting held at Council Offices, Gernon Road,
Letchworth Garden City
on 9 March 2016 at 7.30 p.m.**

MINUTES

PRESENT: *Councillors: Paul Marment (Vice-Chairman), John Booth, Julian Cunningham, Terry Hone, Lorna Kercher, Ian Mantle, Mrs L.A. Needham and Deepak Sangha.*

NB *Councillor Deepak Sangha arrived at 7.34 p.m.*

IN ATTENDANCE: *Liz Green (Head of Policy and Community Services), Claire Morgan (Communities Officer), Sue Hardy (Communities Assistant) and Hilary Dineen (Committee and Member Services Officer).*

ALSO PRESENT: *At the start of the meeting 14 members of the public.*

87. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Clare Billing, Gary Grindal, David Levett, Sandra Lunn and Mike Rice (Chairman).

88. MINUTES – 27 JANUARY 2016

Minute 68 – Resolution (2)

Councillor Mantle clarified that the information requested regarding City Chorus related to information regarding the grant of £1,000 given in 2015.

The Communities Officer advised Members that the information had been included in her report, but appeared to have been deleted during the agenda processing and printing process. She would ensure that the requested information was circulated to all Members of the Committee.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 9 December 2015 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman;
- (2) That the Communities Officer be requested to circulate the requested information regarding the grant funding awarded to City Chorus to all Members of the Letchworth Committee.

89. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business notified.

90. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (1) The Vice - Chairman welcomed all who had attended the meeting, particularly those who had attended to give a presentation;
- (2) The Vice - Chairman informed those present that, in accordance with Council Policy the meeting would be audio recorded;
- (3) The Vice - Chairman drew attention to the item on the agenda front pages regarding Declarations of Interest and reminded Members that, in line with the Code of Conduct, any Declarations of Interest need to be declared immediately prior to the item in question.

91. HERTFORDSHIRE CONSTABULARY

Sergeant Alan Clarke, Letchworth and Baldock Safer Neighbourhood Team Sergeant -Hertfordshire Constabulary, thanked the Vice – Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding the issues affecting policing in the Letchworth area as follows:

- Hertfordshire Constabulary had not done as well as it could have previously in the recording of crime.
- As a result of the National Crime Recording Standards, Hertfordshire was now recording all crime and, as a consequence, the crime figures were higher.

Crime Statistics

All Crime

Hertfordshire – 5.3 percent increase.

Letchworth – 6.9 percent (106 offences) increase.

Burglary - Dwelling

Hertfordshire – 3.1 percent increase.

Letchworth – 15.6 percent decrease.

These figures included offences where the offender was known and demonstrated that the Police were doing well in this area.

Burglary – Other

There had been 71 offences, which was exactly the same as the previous year

Vehicle Crime

Hertfordshire – 20 percent increase.

Letchworth – 5.4 percent decrease.

These figures were achieved despite a recent threat of fuel thefts.

Domestic Abuse / Safeguarding

Hertfordshire – 40 percent increase.

North Hertfordshire – 47 percent increase.

Letchworth – 40 percent increase.

The Police were extremely aware of Domestic abuse and safeguarding, which included not only physical abuse, but also other types of abuse such as financial and psychological.

An increase in this area of crime was viewed positively as it demonstrated that victims felt able to come forward to receive the support needed.

Robbery

Hertfordshire – 47 percent increase.

Letchworth – 44 percent reduction.

This reduction demonstrated that Letchworth was one of the safer places in Hertfordshire to live and visit.

Assault with Injury

Letchworth – 8 percent increase.

This increase was a direct result of the National Crime Recording Standards.

Shoplifting
Letchworth – 12.5 percent decrease.

The Police had a 50 percent detection rate as a direct result of closer liaison with Shoplink and Shopwatch which had resulted in reports of shoplifting being received in a more timely manner.

Theft from Persons
Letchworth – 6.7 percent (5 offences) increase.

There had been a spate of thefts from older persons just before Christmas. Offenders had been sitting inside banks watching people using ATMs and gleaning their PIN numbers, later stealing the card.

The Police had worked with the banks to move the seating which had resulted in the reduction in offences.

Neighbourhood Watch
North Hertfordshire currently had 60 percent coverage (8,000 members) of Neighbourhood Watch.

This was an effective means of relaying information and disseminating crime prevention information and it was recommended that everyone sign up.

Neighbourhood Watch were starting a Senior Watch section and local people were encouraged to contact them and/or join.

OWL Messaging Service
The OWL messaging service was extremely useful in getting information out to people and helpful in garnering public responses.

ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition) Cameras
ANPR cameras were a valuable tool in deterring, disrupting and detecting crime.

There had been an organisational review regarding the number of ANPR cameras in the area and consideration was being given to increasing the numbers in Letchworth.

One camera would be placed in the Industrial Area and it was proposed that another is placed on Norton Road, between Stotfold and Norton.

Members commented that the National Crime Recording Standards had been in place for two years and any related increases should have been during year 1.

Sergeant Clarke advised that there had been a settling in period followed by a review and the police were encouraging people to report crime, which had resulted in more people doing so.

In response to a question Sergeant Clarke informed Members that there had been a total of 1,651 crimes in Letchworth of which 280 were related to domestic abuse (199 in the previous year).

In respect of ANPR cameras, Members asked how these cameras were used, whether the Norton Road was the busiest exit route from Letchworth and whether the information gathered would be shared with Bedfordshire Constabulary

Sergeant Clarke advised that the cameras captured the registration of every vehicle that passed. A small number of vehicles had alert markers, such as those used by drugs dealers, and these could be tracked. The Police could also use it for issues such as missing persons, by flagging the registration number of their car. The camera data was stored, which enabled the Police to look through data when needed.

The proposed location was chosen by the Chief Inspector and was appropriate as other routes in and out of the Town were already covered by cameras.

In response to a question Sergeant Clarke informed Members that Letchworth was safe place to live and work The Police had to balance increasing awareness regarding crime against the fear of crime.

The Vice - Chairman thanked Sergeant Clarke for his presentation.

92. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – CITIZENS ADVICE NORTH HERTS

Ms Rionach Aiken thanked the Vice - Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding the grant funding application for Citizens Advice North Herts.

Ms Aiken stated that Citizens Advice was very grateful to NHDC for both the core funding that they receive and the Officer support given.

They were moving as the current base was too small and they were facing a 40 percent rent increase.

Volunteer number had increased but the current base had three small interview rooms, which limited the number of appointments that could be taken resulting in clients waiting for up to two weeks to be seen.

Employment rates were increasing and debt levels decreasing, but clients were struggling due to an increase in Zero Hours contracts, therefore Citizens Advice were currently focussing on giving advice and support regarding prevention and management of debt.

They had received funding from the energy suppliers to support people with energy advice, including switching suppliers where appropriate.

The aim was to support people to help themselves.

The demand for their services had increased and they supported 5,300 people in Letchworth (an increase of 800). In 2014 24 percent of clients were from Letchworth, this had risen to 44 percent. This demonstrated that the need and demand for services was increasing in Letchworth.

Four of the 'upper quartile' most deprived areas in England were in Letchworth, with 1 in 3 people living in social housing.

Citizens Advice needed to move from the old premises by 20 June 2016 and they had so far raised £110,000 towards fitting out the new premises.

Consideration had been given to moving into Gernon, Road and this would have been the preferred option, however meetings with Officers were cancelled and timescale was an issue.

Members asked why grant applications weren't being made to all of the area committees.

The Head of Policy and Community Services advised that part of the rationale was around possible future plans and/or move in Hitchin.

The Vice - Chairman thanked Ms Aiken for her presentation.

93. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – JACKIE’S DROP IN

Prior to the item being discussed Councillor John Booth declared a Declarable Interest as he was considering Jackie’s Drop In as one of his Chairman’s Charities in the next Civic Year. He advised that he would listen to the presentation and take part in the debate, but would not vote.

Mrs Jackie Nealon thanked the Vice - Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding the grant funding application for Jackie’s Drop In.

Mrs Nealon informed Members that they were relocating to a new building. Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation had agreed a 5 year lease and allocated £10,000 towards the toilets, kitchen and electrical work.

The previous tenants, North Hertfordshire College, would also need to do some work on the building and there was a problem with the roof.

They were looking for funds to fit out the new building which was over two floors and had large windows.

They had used TV and radio to fundraise and had so far raised £20,000 including £4,500 through churches in Letchworth and businesses had donated the building works.

They had a list of things they wished to buy including blinds, computers, TV, microwaves, pots and pans, cutlery and soft furnishings.

They wished to continue to cook meals for the 250 members of the Drop In and offer basic cooking lessons and expand the computer room.

Mrs Nealon advised that they hoped to move in the summer.

Members expressed thanks for the excellent work of Jackie’s Drop In and acknowledged the benefits for the service users.

They were however extremely concerned that there didn’t seem to be a plan in place and that it wasn’t clear who was responsible for what, in terms of getting the building habitable and exactly how much money was needed to get the premises operational.

In respect of operational costs, Members noted that, unlike the existing building where utilities were included in the rent, they would now have to pay utility bills direct, which could amount to a significant sum each year.

They were concerned that priorities were not clear and that consideration had not been given to using some of the equipment from the previous premises.

The Vice - Chairman thanked Mrs Nealon for her presentation.

94. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY TOWN CENTRE PARTNERSHIP

The Communities Officer advised that Mr Tom Hardy, Letchworth Garden City Town Centre Manager, was unable to attend this meeting of the Committee and had offered his apologies.

95. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – ROYAL BRITISH LEGION LETCHWORTH BRANCH

Mrs Joan Ellis thanked the Vice - Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding the grant funding application for the Royal British Legion Letchworth Branch as follows:

- The Armed Forces Day was getting bigger each year:
- A request had been made to use Broadway Walk this year:
- Funding was required for staging, advertising, banners and programmes.

Members acknowledged the valuable work of the Royal British Legion and asked if the event could become self financing.

Mrs Ellis advised that the Armed Forces Day started 4 years ago and any funds received were given to charities. This was now changing and charges were being made for stand and gazebo plots.

The Vice - Chairman thanked Mrs Ellis for her presentation.

96. COMMUNITY UPDATE AND GRANT APPLICATIONS

The Communities Officer presented the report of the Head of Policy and Community Services entitled Community Update and Grant Applications and drew attention to the following:

Budgets

The current level of unallocated funds in the 2015/16 budget was £14,415.

There was £248 remaining in the 2014/15 budget of which £220 had been allocated towards the cost of producing a leaflet for Councillor Surgeries.

Jackmans Community Centre

The flooring was currently being laid in the old library and it was hoped that the launch would take place in April 2016.

City Chorus

The Communities Officer apologised for the information that appeared to have been deleted during the agenda processing and printing process. She would ensure that the requested information was circulated to all Members of the Committee.

Councillor Surgeries

Members noted the statistics provided regarding Councillor surgeries and suggested that, as the event had already been advertised, the surgery due to be held on 19 March continue and that further discussions regarding the future of Councillor Surgeries be held at the next meeting of this Committee.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the budgetary expenditure, balances and carry forwards from the Development and Visioning Budgets be noted;
- (2) That the actions taken by the Community Development Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being for Letchworth Garden City be endorsed;
- (3) That the Communities Officer be requested to organise one further Councillor Surgery after which this Committee will consider options for the future;

REASON FOR DECISION: To keep Members of the Committee apprised of the latest developments in community activities in Letchworth Garden City.

97. GRANT APPLICATION – JACKIES DROP IN

Prior to the item being discussed Councillor John Booth declared a Declarable Interest as he was considering Jackie's Drop In as one of his Chairman's Charities in the next Civic Year. He advised that he would listen to the presentation and take part in the debate, but would not vote.

The Communities Officer advised that the total project cost detailed on the grant application was purely to get the building into a habitable state and that further funds would be required in order to get it operational. It would take time to develop a list of desired equipment and the cost of purchasing this sort of item would be additional to the above.

Members were of the understanding that North Hertfordshire College would paint the building and that Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation had agreed to connect utilities and were providing £10,000 for the kitchen and toilets but they were concerned that a problem with the building's roof did not appear to be addressed.

Various plans had been discussed by the Drop In regarding the use of the building including whether they could install a chair lift to the first floor in order to utilise the large space, but it was discovered that the stairs were too narrow. Consideration was given to installing a lift, but the cost, estimated to be £70,000, was prohibitive. They were now considering using the ground floor for clients and the first floor for volunteers and offices.

Members were concerned that plans had not been developed sufficiently and that there wasn't a detailed list of what was needed and how they would finance the future day to day operational costs, particularly as they would now have to pay the utility bills.

Members acknowledged fantastic work undertaken by the volunteers, but felt that the organisation lacked financial expertise and that, as a result, this move could fail. They suggested that NHCVS could support them in this area.

The Communities Officer advised that she was currently in the process of introducing Jackie's Drop In to NHCVS.

Members suggested that they hold a discussion with Social Services who may be able to contact services from Jackie's Drop In.

Members emphasised their general support of Jackie's Drop In and again acknowledged the valuable work undertaken, but due to the concerns discussed regarding financial and planning expertise, it was suggested that £5,000 be allocated to a new budget for Jackie's Drop In and that they be asked to draw up a business plan to include short and medium term plans and their management structure and provide a clear and costed list of their requirements.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That a sum of £5,000 be allocated from the 2015/16 Discretionary Budget to a new budget entitled Jackie's Drop In;
- (2) That Jackie's Drop In be requested to submit a short and medium term business plan, including details of the management structure and a detailed list of items required together with costs for each item by 30 September 2016;
- (3) That the funds allocated in (1) above not be released until this Committee has had sight of and are satisfied with the documents detailed in (2) above;
- (4) That, if the requested information is not submitted by the above date, these funds will be returned to the base budget.

REASON FOR DECISION: To improve services provided by local organisations and groups which are accessed by the community.

98. GRANT APPLICATION – LETCHWORTH TOWN CENTRE PARTNERSHIP

The Communities Officer reminded Members that the Town Centre Manager, Tom Hardy, had given his apologies that he would not be able to attend this meeting and that he had presented to the last meeting of this Committee regarding the three Town Centre events.

The Committee had so far awarded £2,000 towards the Food and Garden Festival. The next event was the Town Centre Takeover event.

Members asked what the main source of income for the Town Centre Partnership was, apart from grant funding awarded by this Committee.

The Head of Policy and Community Services advised that that, in Letchworth, Membership fees were charged and that NHDC made payments through the BID.

She reminded Members that the Council had taken the decision not to fund Town Centre Partnerships in 2010/11 and advised that, as part of the Grants Review she had been looking at Town Centre organisations, such as those in Hitchin, where the organisations are companies, and often for profit.

Some Members remained confused about the relationship between the Town Centre Partnership and the BID. The Head of Policy and Community Services therefore offered to provide an information note to the next meeting of this committee.

It was proposed that the application for grant funding be deferred until the next meeting and that the Town Centre Manager be informed that the application would only be considered following a presentation.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That, the grant application be deferred to the next meeting of this Committee, due to be held on 8 June 2016;
- (2) That the Communities Officer be requested to advise the Letchworth Garden City Town Centre Partnership that the application for grant funding will only be considered following a presentation by the Town Centre Manager;
- (3) That the Head of Policy and Community Services be requested to provide an information note regarding the relationship between BIDS and Town Centre Partnerships to the next meeting of this committee due to be held on 8 June 2016.

REASON FOR DECISION: To improve services provided by local organisations and groups which are accessed by the community.

99. GRANT APPLICATION – ROYAL BRITISH LEGION LETCHWORTH BRANCH

Members noted that this Committee had funded the purchase of staging in the past and asked if this could be located and used for this sort of event.

The Communities Officer advised that the Committee had part funded a stage for community use. Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation had taken responsibility for this stage and had determined that it wasn't safe to se and it was therefore scrapped.

RESOLVED: That, grant funding of £1,000 be awarded to the British Legion Letchworth Branch from the 2015/16 Discretionary Budget towards the cost of the Armed Forces Day event due to be held on 25 June 2016.

REASON FOR DECISION: To improve services provided by local organisations and groups which are accessed by the community.

100. GRANT APPLICATION – CITIZENS ADVICE NORTH HERTS

Prior to the item being heard Councillor Ian Mantle declared a Declarable Interest as he was a member of the Citizens Advice North Herts Management Committee. He advised that he would therefore take no part in the debate or vote.

Prior to the item being heard Councillor Terry Hone declared a Declarable Interest as he had, as a County Councillor, given a grant of £1,000 from his Locality Budget to Citizens Advice North Herts. He advised that he would take part in the debate, but would not vote.

Prior to the item being heard Councillor Lorna Kercher declared a Declarable Interest as she had, as a County Councillor, given a grant of £1,000 from her Locality Budget to Citizens Advice North Herts. She advised that she would take part in the debate, but would not vote.

Members acknowledged the work of Citizens Advice North Herts and noted that there were significant areas of deprivation in Letchworth and therefore the organisation should be supported.

They were concerned that the other Area Committees should receive grant applications as this was an organisation that supported the whole of North Hertfordshire.

There was some discussion about whether or not the Committee should allocate some funding from the next financial year, although there was some doubt about the exact amount that would be available for grant funding in future years.

Members were reminded that the Council already supported Citizens Advice North Herts centrally.

Councillor Needham advised that, in her role as Leader of the Council, she had been notified that more savings may be required from next year's budget.

It was proposed and seconded that £8,415 be awarded to Citizens Advice North Herts and that applications for grant funding be made to the other Area Committees.

Due to the declarations of interest the Committee was inquorate. They however requested and

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Head of Policy and Community Services be requested to process grant funding of £8,415 to Citizens Advice North Herts from the 2015/16 Discretionary Budget towards the cost of fixtures and fittings for the new premises at 29 Station Road Letchworth under delegated powers;
- (2) That the Communities Officer be requested to support Citizens Advice North Herts to make applications for grant funding to the other Area Committees.

REASON FOR DECISION: To improve services provided by local organisations and groups which are accessed by the community.

101. INFORMATION NOTE – LETCHWORTH DEMOGRAPHICS

The Committee received an Information Note and PowerPoint presentation from the Head of Policy and Community Development regarding Letchworth Demographics

The Head of Policy and Community Services gave a demonstration on the use of the DCLG website that gave detailed maps and statistics including those on income

deprivation, employment, educational skills, health and disability, living environment and housing access.

She informed Members that the website was based on statistics from 2013 and gave an indication of relative deprivation.

The site could be used to consider the types of deprivation in a certain area and therefore work out what relevant support could be provided and the development of strategies

The Local Enterprise Partnerships were using the site to identify where to focus training.

Members noted that there were a lot of agencies and a lot of strategies and asked if there was any co-ordinator ensuring that planned actions were completed.

The Head of Policy and Community Services advised that Partnership Enhanced Communities coordinated home safety, fire, crime, and Police. Some of the fragmentation was about the varied approach and different funding organisations.

She agreed to circulate the web address to all Members of the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the Head of Policy and Community Services be requested to circulate the DCLG web address to all Members of the Committee.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure that the Letchworth Committee remains appraised of demographics in the Letchworth area.

102. WARD AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS – MEMBERS’ REPORTS

Memorial Tree Planting – Howard Park.

Councillor Ian Mantle informed Members that a constituent had paid for a tree to be planted in memory of his wife and that a dedication ceremony had been held on Sunday 6 March 2016.

The meeting closed at 9.52 p.m.

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Chairman