

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

SOUTHERN RURAL COMMITTEE

**MEETING HELD IN THE FOUNDATION HOUSE, ICKNIELD WAY,
LETCWORTH GARDEN CITY
ON THURSDAY, 8TH MARCH, 2018 AT 7.30 PM**

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors David Barnard (Chairman), John Bishop, Steve Deakin-Davies, Faye Frost, Jane Gray, Harry Spencer-Smith and Claire Strong*

In Attendance:

Claire Morgan (Senior Communities Officer) and Hilary Dineen (Acting Committee and Member Services Manager)

Also Present:

At the commencement of the meeting 10 members of the public.

51 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Cathryn Henry (Vice-Chairman), Steve Hemingway and Terry Tyler.

52 MINUTES - 30 NOVEMBER 2017

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 30 November 2017 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

53 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

There were no notifications of other business.

54 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (1) The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly those giving a presentation;
- (2) The Chairman reminded everyone that, in accordance with Council policy, the meeting was being audio recorded;
- (3) The Chairman advised that the winter meeting of the Southern Rural Committee had be changed and would now be held on 6 December 2018;
- (4) The 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 needed to be declared immediately prior to the item in question.

55 HERTFORDSHIRE CONSTABULARY

Inspector Richard Lilley and Sergeant Steve Oliphant thanked the Chairman for the invitation to address the Committee.

Sergeant Oliphant advised that the statistics and other information covered the whole of the Southern Rural area including Great Ashby.

Statistics

All Crime

- 1,063 reports of crime, an increase of 22.9 percent (198 reports).

Residential Burglary

- 99 reports

Criminal Damage

- 159 reports, an increase of 19.5 percent (26 reports).
- This figure included damage to farmer's land, game keepers property, crops and gates.

Anti-Social Behaviour

- 372 reports, an increase of 6 percent (22 reports).
- This figure included nuisance driving, noise and littering.

Environmental Crime

- 16 reports.
- The Police worked closely with NHDC regarding environmental crime.
- Some reports were made directly to NHDC.
- NHDC had achieved some excellent prosecution results regarding fly tipping.
- The Police had undertaken joint patrols with NHDC looking at waste carriers.

Challenges

Burglary Dwelling

Two particular villages had been targeted, however they had, in response, increased the Safer Streets campaign and a number of investigations were now with Hatfield Station.

The Safer Streets Campaign was where Police Offices go to into the community to undertake crime prevention work, get people to sign up to the online watch link system (OWL)

The crime prevention work included offering surveys of people's property and the OWL system enabled officers to get fast time information out to people.

A number of investigations now sat with the specialist investigation team based in Hatfield.

Damage to Farmland

Crop damage and criminal damage had been a problem for the last three years and it had been a challenge to meet the demand in this area.

This has been another year of this area being targeted by people from outside North Herts, which had been a challenge to tackle.

They had met with landowners and game keepers to discuss how to tackle this problem and this work would be ongoing.

Members commented that the Committee had previously made a grant to purchase a quad bike and queried how this was being used.

Sergeant Oliphant advised that the quad bike was used when resources allowed, which had not been that often in the last 12 months.

The quad bike was fantastic for ensuring that there was Police visibility but was not suitable for catching offenders who were often in 4-wheel drive vehicles, as it put officers at risk of being harmed.

It was more commonly used for patrols and visits to game keeper.

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Inspector Lilley advised that the quad bike was a good asset which was particularly well used when searching for missing people.

More officers had been trained to use the quad bike, but it was important to choose the right time to use it.

Members commented on the spate of graffiti in Hitchin and that there had been a small amount in the villages and queried what action was being taken.

Sergeant Oliphant advised that two people had been arrested and two further people were being monitored in connection with the Zen graffiti tag seen in Hitchin.

Members noted that the Police had held a meeting for farmers and land owners last year and queried whether there would be another meeting like this.

Sergeant Oliphant advised that the meeting last year had been in response to specific occurrences.

This year they had visited individual landowners, game keepers and farmers in order to understand what had happened and ask their advice. They were also working with their colleagues in Bedfordshire who were experiencing similar issues.

If landowners, farmers and gamekeepers feel that another group meeting should be held, it would be organised.

Members commented that there had been an incident of a farmer being rammed and queried what action was taken and whether local people could be kept informed.

Sergeant Oliphant advised that the matter had been fully investigated and following a joint decision with the victim, it was decided not to proceed to court.

The Police would investigate all incidents, but it was reliant on a partnership between them, residents and landowners.

Members asked for information regarding staffing challenges.

Inspector Lilley advised that the Safer Neighbourhood Team had reached full establishment over the last 4 months and, although there was likely to be some staff movements soon, a recruitment phase for PCs and PCSOs had started.

Members commented that they would not wish to see too many staff movements as the current establishment were known in their local area and had the trust of local people.

The Chairman thanked Inspector Lilley and Sergeant Oliphant for their presentation.

56 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - KNEBORTH FOOTBALL CLUB

Ms Fiona Davies, Knebworth Football Club, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding their application for grant funding.

Mrs Davies informed Members that Knebworth Football Club catered for all ages from 3 years old to seniors and veterans.

There were currently two girls' teams being under 11 and under 16.

The under 11 team was a new team that had only been playing this year and, although they struggled in the early days, they were now beginning to win games.

They would like to start an under 9 girl's team, although it would take time and money to train the girls and develop skills.

This team needed equipment including a football for each team member, flags and barriers to make a safe environment. They would also need to pay for pitch hire and kit.

The kit was usually paid for by a sponsor, but this was a new team that did not yet have a sponsor.

It was important to have a Level 1 qualified coach who would interact with the girls positively.

The aim was for coaches to go into schools to encourage girls to play football as they needed to start the journey as soon as possible and they may not get this opportunity elsewhere.

Playing football promoted exercise and team working and by taking turns to be captain they learnt leadership skills.

The Club had enabled the girls to become involved in the village, Teenagers to train as coaches and brought the parents together.

Grant funding was required to help start the training in schools.

Members advised that they should contact their County Councillor for further grant funding and asked whether any further funds were required.

Miss Davis advised that they always needed money for equipment.

The Chairman thanked Ms Davies for her presentation.

57 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - STEPPING STONES PRE-SCHOOL

Mr Jason Aydoo, Stepping Stones Pre-School thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding their application for grant funding.

Mr Aydoo informed Members that he was a committee member of Stepping Stones. He advised that in his 15 years as a Police Officer in the City of London he had witnessed the effects of domestic violence, poverty and the lack of leisure activities on young children.

Stepping Stones was one of three nurseries in Knebworth and was offered flexible care and education to children aged from 2.5 to 5 years old.

At the last Ofsted inspection in 2012 the nursery was rated as outstanding with the next inspection due this year.

The nursery was situated in the village pavilion, which was shared with the football club and was surrounded by football pitches, tennis courts and playing fields.

They were applying for a grant of £250 to fund a term of superstar sport, delivered by a local coach with specialist training to teach pre-school children, costing £25 per session.

This was an all-inclusive pre-school which had 39 children from Knebworth, surrounding villages and Stevenage. It offered a wide curriculum which included literacy, numeracy and science as well as creative and physical activities.

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The school aimed to provide additional activities at no extra costs to the families and had successfully fundraised to bring in specialist teachers and expert tuition for music, dance and yoga.

The pre-school would like to expand the opportunities for children to enjoy more traditional sports and encourage children to be more physically active and learn to work as a team.

Early year's education was vital to provide opportunities for children who would otherwise not have access. Personalities were shaped in the first three years of life and participation in sport could help children deal with accomplishment, disappointment, team working, respecting others and making the right decisions.

Stepping Stones wished to engage with children and give them the necessary tools to believe in themselves, try new things and enjoy leaning.

Members queried whether the superstar sport sessions would be open to all of the children who attended the nursery.

Mr Aydoo advised that all of the children would be encouraged to participate, with the hope that they would get involved with the local sport clubs as they got older.

The Chairman thanked Mr Aydoo for his presentation.

58 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - COCKERNHOE MEMORIAL HALL

Mr David Sample, Cockernhoe Memorial Hall, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding their application for grant funding.

Mr Sample informed Members that he was the Clerk of Offley Parish Council and was speaking on behalf of both the Parish Council and the Memorial Hall.

Offley Parish was quite large with a village hall and a memorial hall.

Following a housing development in 2012, North Herts Homes donated a field to Offley Parish Council, which had continued to be maintained by the Parish Council.

The Parish Council had received a request for a play area and subsequently consulted the residents of Cockernhoe and Mangrove. There was an 11 percent return with no objections raised to the proposal and initial costings for the project was £38,000.

They had received some funding for a previous scheme from the land fill tax, but this source of funding was no longer available, therefore the initial scheme to fund raise and build the whole play area was no longer feasible and it would now be that the play area would be expanded as funds were raised.

Cockernhoe Memorial Hall were requesting £2,400 to start the fund for the building of the play area, with all of the maintenance costs, public liability etc costs being met by the Parish Council. There was also the possibility of £5,000 Section 106 funding to put towards the project.

Additional fund raising would be required and some funds would come from the Party in the Park in July 2018.

Cockernhoe and Mangrove had a growing population of younger people and there were no play areas.

Members asked for clarification regarding when the project would start.

Mr Sample advised that within 4 weeks swings would be installed and then equipment would be added in a phased programme, dependent on funding being raised.

Members suggested that they apply to London Luton Airport and the County Councillor for funding.

The Chairman thanked Mr Sample for his presentation.

59 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - PIRTON TABLE TENNIS CLUB

Mr Joe Charlesworth and Mr David Joyce, Pirton Table Tennis Club, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding their application for grant funding.

Mr Chalesworth informed Members that the Pirton Table Tennis Club was started 2 years ago and currently had a membership of 10 people aged up to 75 years old. The Club was affiliated to the English Table Tennis Association and were part of a league.

The Club was started as there was no sports club for older people who did not wish to or were unable to offer the level of exertion required for other sports.

They currently met and played at the Sports and Social Club, which had its problems as they had to move the table and chairs every night and put them back, however the Village Hall had agreed that they could move to their premises in future.

This move had given the opportunity to try to expand the Club and the aim was to start a youth section.

The village was expanding and there were a significant number of new younger families moving into the village.

The Club had some equipment that they had purchased though donations, which was currently offered for use by the Youth Club and it was hoped that some of those from the Youth Club would join the Table Tennis Club.

Members were in the process of obtaining CRB checks etc and were actively canvassing some of the parents of younger children to join in.

The grant application was to purchase two further table tennis tables and some sports hall dividers.

The benefits included the possibility of starting a youth section and the opportunity for people to participate in a sport.

Mr Joyce advised that he had been playing in the Table Tennis League for 20 years and was really pleased that the team in his village were eligible to joint the league and that the standard of play was at a level suitable for this.

The division had 12 teams and the Pirton Club was second from the bottom, which was very good for the first season.

People in the Club enjoyed playing and treated it as a social event.

In response to a question, Mr Joyce advised that membership fees had recently been increased to £30 per year, which covered the increased costs associated with moving to the Village Hall. The policy was to encourage people to attend a couple of sessions as a taster, in the hope that they would then join the Club.

Members queried where the tables would be stored when not in use.

Mr Joyce advised that they had been provided with space at the Village Hall.

Members noted that Table Tennis was an accessible sport for all and suggested that the Club may wish to make applications for grant funding to Pirton Parish Council and the Pirton Boxing Day run

The Chairman thanked Mr Charlesworth and Mr Joyce for their presentation.

60 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - WASTE NOT WANT NOT

Mr Hal Fowler, Chair of Waste Not Want Not, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding their application for grant funding.

Mr Fowler informed Members that he had been Chair of Waste Not Want Not for 4 years.

Waste Not Want Not provided a safe environment where a wide range of people, with the common thread of isolation, can feel included in their local community through positive activity working with plants.

They had a 4 acre plant nursery between Stevenage and Knebworth where they rescued plants from large organisations such as the Royal Horticultural Society as well as growing plant from seed.

They were open 6 days a week for 48 weeks of the year and employed one full time employee who work as a project leader and from this year have employed a part time members of staff, which had enabled them to open 7 days per week.

There were currently 35 people attending each week during the winter which increased to about 50 in the spring.

Most people who attended Waste Not Want Not were disadvantaged either by health or poverty. There were a number of people with learning disabilities, mental health problems, drink or drug addictions, retired people and those struggling to find work. Having a mix of people working together provided a great result.

They had been successful in enabling different disadvantaged groups to work together.

They had received interest from care homes in the project and had established some transport links

Although they had purchased a wheelchair accessible greenhouse they had so far been unable to help people with accessibility issues such as wheelchair users as there were no accessible toilet facilities.

Although water mains had been installed, following a 4 year effort, the site currently did not have mains drainage. Grant funding was therefore being requested to help with the purchase of a wheelchair accessible portable toilet with handles for the site.

The base for the toilet and pathways for wheelchair uses would be installed by the Group

Members asked for a brief description of the type of work undertaken by users and for clarification that the site was within North Herts.

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Mr Fowler advised that they had recently agreed to work with Oaklands College, who would be sending 6 students with learning disabilities and they would join the other users to work and learn about all aspects of horticulture.

The project cost approximately £30,000 to run of which 73 percent was raised by direct sales

They currently had two sites. The Roebuck site was a working nursery and the site in the Galleria, Hatfield was a learning garden where they offered opportunities for people to take part.

Often peoples visit to the site was the only contact that users had.

The majority of the Roebuck site was situated within North Herts.

The Chairman thanked Mr Fowler for his presentation.

61 GRANTS AND COMMUNITY UPDATE

The Communities Officer presented the report of the Communities Manager entitled Community Update and Grant Applications and drew attention to the following;

Unallocated Funds

The Communities Officer advised that it was, as yet, unclear whether any unallocated funds for 2017/18 would be carried forward, therefore the Committee may wish to allocate any remaining funds to Community Initiatives.

Funding Advice

The Communities Officer advised Members that she regularly gave funding advice and was currently working with Offley Pre-School and Offley School Association following a request for advice.

Community Facilities Capital Grant Programme

- Knebworth Scout and Guide Group
A grant award of £32,000 had been recommended for improvement to their building.
- Pirton Village Hall
A grant award of £45,000 had been recommended for an extension to the building.
- Dacre Rooms. Kimpton
Grant funding of £50,000 had been awarded to refurbish and update the ground floor and to replace the boiler.
- John Clements Sports and Community Centre
Grant funding of £50,000 had been awarded for the provision of a stand alone Health and Wellbeing Facility to adjoin the existing facility.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That £1,874 be allocated from the 2017/18 Discretionary Budget towards Community Initiatives;
- (2) That the activities and schemes with which the Communities Officer has been involved with, as set out in the report, be noted;
- (3) That the budgetary expenditure, balances and carry forwards within the Area Committee Development Budget spreadsheet be noted;

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- (4) That the actions taken by the Communities Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being in the Southern Rural Area be endorsed'

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure that the Southern Rural Committee is kept informed of the work of the Communities Manager and to inform Members of the financial resources and current budgetary position.

62 WARD GRANT APPLICATION - KNEBWORTH FOOTBALL CLUB

The Communities Manager reminded Members that grant funding was requested by Knebworth Football Club towards the development of girl's football.

They had requested £250 from the Ward Budget for Councillor Deakin-Davies to help with the purchase of equipment costing £700.

Members felt that this was a valuable project and it was proposed and seconded that a further £250 be awarded from the Committee's Discretionary Budget.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That grant funding of £250 be awarded to Knebworth Football Club from the 2017/18 Ward Budget for Councillor Deakin-Davies towards the cost of providing equipment that will enable the development of girl's football;
- (2) That grant funding of £250 be awarded to Knebworth Football Club from the 2017/18 Discretionary Budget towards the cost of providing equipment that will enable the development of girl's football.

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

63 WARD GRANT APPLICATION - STEPPING STONES PRE-SCHOOL

The Communities Officer reminded Members that Ward grant funding had been requested for Stepping Stones Pre-School to provide sports activities for the young children.

RESOLVED: That grant funding of £250 be awarded to Stepping Stones Pre-School from the 2017/18 Ward Budget for Councillor Deakin-Davies towards the cost of providing 10 super sports coaching sessions.

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

64 GRANT APPLICATION - COCKERNHOE MEMORIAL HALL

The Communities Officer reminded Members that grant funding of £2,400 had been requested by Cockernhoe Memorial Hall to help provide a play area for children aged under 11, which would cost a total of £38,000.

Any funds awarded would go toward the first phase of a large project.

She reminded Members of the NHDC Green Space Strategy in respect of play areas and that NHDC would not pay for ongoing maintenance of any new play areas.

Members considered that this proposed play area was in a parished area and that, as such the Parish Council were fully aware that they would have to provide ongoing maintenance.

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Councillor Strong advised that she wished for the balance of her Ward Budget for 2017/18 (£380.00) be awarded to this project

Councillor Barnard advised that he wished for the balance of his Ward Budget for 2017/18 (£450.00) be awarded to this project

Councillor Frost advised that she wished for the balance of her Ward Budget for 2017/18 (£360.00) be awarded to this project

RESOLVED:

- (1) That grant funding of £2,400 be awarded to Cockernhoe Memorial Hall from the 2017/18 Discretionary Budget towards the cost of building an under 11s play area;
- (2) That grant funding of £450 be awarded to Cockernhoe Memorial Hall from the 2017/18 Ward Budget for Councillor Barnard towards the cost of building an under 11s play area;
- (3) That grant funding of £360 be awarded to Cockernhoe Memorial Hall from the 2017/18 Ward Budget for Councillor Frost towards the cost of building an under 11s play area;
- (4) That grant funding of £380 be awarded to Cockernhoe Memorial Hall from the 2017/18 Ward Budget for Councillor Strong towards the cost of building an under 11s play area;

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

65 GRANT APPLICATION - PIRTON TABLE TENNIS CLUB

RESOLVED: That grant funding of £1,066 be awarded to Pirton Table Tennis Club from the 2017/18 Discretionary Budget toward the cost of purchasing two table tennis tables and nets and nine sports hall dividers.;

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

66 GRANT APPLICATION - WASTE NOT WANT NOT

RESOLVED: That grant funding of £1,880 be awarded to Waste Not Want Not from the 2017/18 Discretionary Budget toward the costs associated with the installation of a disabled accessible portable toilet.

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

67 GRANT APPLICATION - JOHN CLEMENTS CENTRE

Councillor Gray advised that she had submitted a request for allocation of her Ward Budget, but this had not appeared in the paperwork.

The Communities Manager advised that she had not received the necessary paperwork from the proposed applicant.

The Committee wished to ensure that these funds were available to the proposed applicant, but not released until a satisfactory application had been received and it was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: That, pending a satisfactory grant application being received, £500 be allocated in principle to the John Clements Centre from the 2017/18 Ward Budget for Councillor Gray.

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

68 WARD MATTERS AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS - MEMBERS' REPORTS

London Luton Airport Consultative Committee

Councillor Barnard advised that he had attended the London Luton Airport Consultative Committee, which had discussed the proposed expansion of the airport.

Chilterns Conservation Board

Councillor Barnard advised that he had attended the Chilterns Conservation Board and that they were investigating the expansion of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

69 COUNCILLOR JANE GRAY

Councillor Gray had previously announced that she would not be standing for e-election in May 2018.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Southern Rural Committee, thanked Councillor Gray for all of her hard work for the Council, particularly in the Southern Rural Area.

The meeting closed at 9.05 pm

Chairman