

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

SOUTHERN RURAL COMMITTEE

**MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNCIL OFFICES. GERON ROAD,
LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY ON THURSDAY, 6TH DECEMBER, 2018 AT 7.30 PM**

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors Claire Strong (Chairman), Steve Deakin-Davies (Vice-Chairman), John Bishop, Ian Moody, Lisa Nash, Harry Spencer-Smith and Terry Tyler*

In Attendance: *Claire Morgan (Senior Communities Officer) and Hilary Dineen (Acting Committee and Member Services Manager)*

32 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – Start of item – 24 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Faye Frost and David Barnard.

33 MINUTES - 14 JUNE 2018

Audio Recording – Start of Item – 39 seconds

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 14 June 2018 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

34 MINUTES - 13 SEPTEMBER 2018

Audio Recording – Start of Item – 53 seconds

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 13 September 2018 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

35 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – Start of Item - 1 minute 12 seconds

There was no other business notified.

36 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – Start of item – 1 minute 17 seconds

- (1) The Chairman welcomed those present at the meeting, especially those who had attended to give a presentation;
- (2) The Chairman welcomed Councillor David Levett (Executive Member for Planning, Enterprise and Transport) who would be giving a presentation regarding the Local Plan;
- (3) The Chairman advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be audio recorded;

- (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.

37 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - WASTE NOT WANT NOT

Audio Recording – Start of Item – 1 minute 58 seconds

Mr Hal Fowler, Waste Not Want Not, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding the work undertaken following a previous award of grant funding from the Committee.

In response to questions from members, Mr Fowler responded:

- Due to funding received for wheelchair accessible toilet, this has enabled people to stay for a whole day rather than just one hour;
- Grown due to support from Southern Rural Committee;
- Disadvantaged groups who benefited were more diverse;
- Wheelchair drop-off area was due to be installed in January;
- Open day was being held in March to promote the service;
- Wheelchair users, on day release from hospital, were given voluntary managerial positions with excellent results.

The Chairman thanked Mr Fowler for his presentation.

38 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - KIMPTON HISTORY GROUP

Audio Recording – Start time of Item – 7 minutes and 52 seconds

John Pollington, from Kimpton History Group thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding the work undertaken following a previous award of grant funding from the Committee. Mr Pollington sent apologies on behalf of the Chairman who was away.

- A grant of £980 was received by Kimpton History Group for the design and printing of a heritage trail map in leaflet form for the village. The intention was to make the history of Kimpton more accessible and vibrant and visitors.
- Wanted to have it ready for Kimpton May Festival. The map was designed and produced by Paul Martin Associates who produced it within budget and on time.
- An extra £90 was paid from their own funds to enable them to double the quantity of leaflets printed;
- It was well received by the villagers and visitors and was available free of charge at the Post Office and Stores, in the pub and in the parish church;
- Thanks to the grant, many villagers and visitors had been able to explore the history of the village;

In response to questions from members, Mr Pollington responded:

- The leaflets were kept in display boxes at the three most popular locations;
- The availability of the leaflets had not yet been advertised on the Facebook pages however Mr Pollington agreed that this would be a good idea;

The Chairman thanked Mr Pollington for his presentation.

39 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - ICKLEFORD SPORTS CLUB

Audio recording – Start of Item – 11 minutes and 51 seconds

Ms Rowena Birdsey, Secretary of Ickleford Sports Club, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee regarding the work undertaken following a previous award of grant funding from the Committee.

- Sports were available to lots of users at the club and included football, cricket, petanque, squash courts in addition to others;
- Management of the facility was done by charging rents to the various sections and the bar was thriving;
- The Club was built in the 1970's. Maintenance had been done however there were occasional times when funds were not available for larger repairs;
- The front path was dangerous so they applied for a grant of £950 which was approved and whole path was replaced the week after money had been received;
- The facility was being managed without the assistance of national monies;
- 12,000, over 800 members, people were using the facility annually;

In response to questions from members, Rowena Birdsey responded:

- The access route area was thought to be cracked due to tree roots rather than delivery vehicles however posts were going to be erected just in case;
- The branches had been chopped back when the area was re-laid however they were not going to cut down the trees;
- Access was needed by emergency vehicles and they would come in the other way;

The Chairman thanked Ms Birdsey for her presentation.

40 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - KIMPTON PRE-SCHOOL

Audio Recording – Start of Item – 18 minutes and 20 seconds

Mr Mike Newman, Chairman of Kimpton Pre-School Management Committee, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding their grant application.

- Pre-school run by a group of 7 parents and ex-parents;
- Funds were needed for IT. They were reliant on EYFS and Herts for Learning to send information. Had to be sent to one of the parents to reformat the document to enable it to be read;
- Voted outstanding OFSTED premises from 2015-16. The pre-school was the only place for 2-3 year olds to go within Kimpton. Very little childcare support was now in Kimpton;
- No external funding was received;
- Fundraising events were not done in the pre-school as the terms of the Lease prevented them from holding these events on site after 4pm Monday to Friday during term time;
- Stalls were used at the Christmas fair or other events during the year;
- Learning journals (a milestone of how children learn), were needed for the children and were an OFSTED requirement. They would like four Kindle Fire tablets because of their reliability and were cheaper than other brands;
- Online system called Tapestry, industry standard across pre-schools and nursery schools. If Tapestry was available, the parents would have access to this system at any time and could be handed straight over to the nursery/reception school when the time came;

- £500/year was spent on printing;
- PC needed to be upgraded and a projector screen was also needed. One of the parents worked for a company that did IT fit-outs for schools and various secondary schools gifted old PC's to a worthy cause. They had been given a projector worth £700 however they needed a screen to put it on;
- There was a strong commitment to Prevent, a Government system to ensure radicalisation did not happen at any point in a child's life. The pre-school manager was a practicing Muslim and was keen to share her own background and beliefs which would give an opportunity to show videos and do more interactive activities for the children;
- There was only one intake into nursery annually;

In response to questions from members including Councillors Bishop and Tyler , Mike Newman responded as follows:

- There were four paid staff who were paid with the money earned from funded 2 and 3 year olds and non-funded 2 year olds covered everything. This meant that under government regulations, children had a right to start education of some form in a structured format from the age of 2½. Parents could apply for up to 15 hours/week until the age of 3 and from the January of their 3rd birthday they could move up to 30 hours' worth of government funding. The fewer children in the pre-school the less money available and no central core funding was available because Kimpton pre-school, unlike nursery was effectively private;
- Parents were charged £16.50 per session;
- The nursery only took children from 3½;
- 3 year old children were lost from September therefore they lost an entire term's worth of funding for the 3 year olds if the parents chose not to keep their child at the pre-school. They could hold children until they were four and they would go straight to reception. Needed to compete with nursery school to maintain numbers otherwise children would have gone from nursery to reception to year 1;
- Kindles were required for each member of staff to enable them to do their daily observations and included social interaction; problem solving and conflict resolution of up to four children;
- Projector screen needed was adjustable so it could be kept out of the way;
- Councillors advised there was an open day at Town Lodge to look at available furniture and would check to see whether the screen was still there;

The Chairman thanked Mr Newman for his presentation.

41 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - BREACHWOOD GREEN PRE-SCHOOL

The Senior Communities Officer advised that the Breachwood Green Pre-School were holding their Carol Concert that evening and therefore were unable to attend to address the Committee.

42 GRANTS & COMMUNITY UPDATE

Audio recording – Start of Item – 45 minutes and 10 seconds

The Senior Communities Manager presented the report entitled Grants and Community Update and drew attention to the following:

Chairman's Volunteer Awards

The Awards were now open for nominations on the NHDC website.

43 GRANT APPLICATION - BREACHWOOD GREEN PRE-SCHOOL

Audio recording – Start of Item – 34 minutes and 7 seconds

GRANT APPLICATION: BREACHWOOD GREEN PRE-SCHOOL

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

Regarding alternative options there were none proposed other than those detailed in the report.

RESOLVED:

That grant funding of £250 be awarded to Breachwood Green Pre-School. This would come from Faye Frost's ward budget.

Under the constitution, individual members were unable to make decisions on funding as it was not their budget. All funding had to come through an officer and had to be recommended. Groups would need to speak to their ward members and if it came through the ward member, the Committee would need to agree funding jointly. A completed application form was required and they needed to be compliant with all the relevant grant criteria.

REASON FOR DECISION:

To improve services provided by local organisations and groups which are accessed by the community.

44 GRANT APPLICATION - KIMPTON PRE-SCHOOL

Audio recording – Start of Item – 41 minutes and 32 seconds

GRANT APPLICATION: KIMPTON PRE-SCHOOL

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

Regarding alternative options there were none proposed other than those detailed in the report.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That grant funding of £619 was awarded to Kimpton Pre-School from the 2017/18 Development Budget for the purchase of IT equipment;
- (2) That, subject to (3) below, grant funding of £1.467 would be awarded to Kimpton Pre-School from the 2018/19 Development Budget for the purchase of IT equipment;
- (3) That, should suitable equipment be sourced from the NHDC Charity Giveaway Day, the amount of funds awarded in (2) above be reduced accordingly.
- (4) Should an ex-Council projector screen be found and was suitable, the cost would be reduced otherwise the full amount would be awarded;

REASON FOR DECISION:

To improve services provided by local organisations and groups which are accessed by the community.

45 LOCAL PLAN UPDATE

Audio recording – Start of Item – 46 minutes and 7 seconds

Councillor David Levett, Executive Member for Planning, Enterprise and Transport, thanked the Chairman for inviting him to address the Committee and gave a PowerPoint presentation regarding the current status of the Local Plan and the expected timetable for future progress.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Levett for his presentation.

Background:

- ‘Preferred Options’ document approved for consultation on 24/11/2014 which ran from 18/12/2014 – 05/02/2015;
- 8,382 responses – 15,500 individual comments from those responses;
- There were major revisions and a submission version was approved for consultation on 11/04/2017. The consultation period ran from 19/10/2016 – 30/11/2016. There were 2,459 responses and 5,675 individual representations;
- Public Hearing with an Inspector in Letchworth. Originally scheduled for 8 days however there were 28 days of hearings in total which ran between November 2017 to March 2018;
- There were 400 representations and included input from the public, councillors and MP’s, developer’s landowners, neighbouring authorities, health, education, transport, environmental authorities, various pressure groups, parish and town councils and public bodies;
- During the Hearing additional work and background information was requested by the Inspector and extra work was volunteered to give extra substance and explain things in more clarity. This was submitted in June 2018. Updates followed as there were two legislative changes and information in local plans, particularly regarding environmental assessment that meant extra work was required;
- Inspector requested further clarification following these which were submitted in November 2018;
- Inspector’s main modifications and supporting documents were published on 19th November 2018;
- Special Cabinet meeting scheduled for 10th December 2018 at 3pm which was to grant approval for consultation on the following:
 - Inspector’s proposed main modifications to the plan;
 - A sustainability appraisal which looked at those modification in context and made sure that the plan was still viable;
 - There were some additional documents which were submitted to the Inspector as requested by him;
 - All these documents were located on the main council website under local plan;
 - The consultation, assuming approved by Cabinet was on 10th December 2018, ran for six weeks from 3rd January 2019 to 14th February 2019. Due to the volume of the documentation, plenty of time was given for everyone to go through it prior to the full consultation process;

What had not changed:

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- Fundamentally the same plan was approved for submission by full Council in April 2017. There were no changes to the housing requirement had not changed. The identified need still needed to be met in full. A reasonable contribution needed to fulfil Luton's unmet housing needs and Stevenage's employment needs;
- The land marked as greenbelt release, was to be released from the greenbelt. A large area however was designated around Offley and Whitwell between Hitchin and Luton which stopped the encroachment into North Herts as new greenbelt. This was being pushed to be included as it was extremely rare to put new greenbelt in. The Inspector accepted that and included extra greenbelt. The result was that there was 9% more greenbelt than before;
- The land allocations, with the exception of one site in Royston where development had started in the intervening period, revealed that no allocations were deleted nor any new sites added. The new development should have made provision for the required infrastructure and that was an accumulative view. All the development, when looked at planning applications, should have taken into account the cumulative view of any development within the local plan;
- Provision of up to 40% affordable housing on new developments remain. The amount would depend on the size of the development and there was a large proportion earmarked as affordable, rented accommodation which also remains.

The Main Modifications:

- 400 modifications were identified, ranging from insertion of a single to the introduction of new or replacement policies. Each of the 106 sites had become a policy site which meant that policies had to be met before development could be approved;
- The main modifications were submitted to a sustainability appraisal and sustainability appraisal was one of those documents for consultation;
- A tracked change version of the submission version was available on the website which made it easier to follow all the changes;

Key Changes:

- Barkway, Knebworth, Codicote, Little Wymondley and Ickleford were originally classified as Category A villages. The Inspector said that they were more developed than most of the others, so they were identified as villages "identified for growth". A clear explanation of how future retail needs were to be met by distributing a new floor space across the district. The Inspector wanted to know how this would be allocated on a town by town basis. This had been attempted however was very difficult with the current retail situation and they were trying to be as realistic as possible;
- The local transport plan – LTP4 was incorporated within the local plan and the plan focused on 'modul shift' getting on your bikes using public transport more had been incorporated into the local plan and on the individual site locations as well. There was additional criteria information to propose site allocations which had to be met by any new development. Concise information was required from the developers and they would need to specify the size and whether something should be retained or not. All the allocations were now to become policies instead of advisory guidance which would be very important when making planning decisions;
- Extensive changes were made to the Development Management Policies of the plan and needed to be sufficiently robust to achieve the intended results;

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- Additional policy guidance had been provided and the plan would be implemented and monitored so there would be a more detailed action plan;
- Letchworth Garden City design principles were not in the plan mainly because they were not exactly conforming to the NPPF which was the National Planning Policy Framework. However the Inspector requested that these be put in;
- Full allocation of land to Danesbury Park Road in the south of the district to meet future needs of gypsy and traveller accommodation. One site was already present. Planning application and appeal was in process throughout the hearings and site was therefore now included as part of the local plan.

Where do we go from here:

- 10th December 2018 – Cabinet approved consultation. This was a straightforward decision with no debate;
- Consultation ran from 3rd January 2019 – 14th February 2019. All responses were to be collated and then sent to the Inspector. The Inspector reviewed the representations and he said that “he would not consider unrelated or new representations”. He was asking purely on the main points and additional documents;
- Inspector then prepared a final report of recommendations taking into consideration anything that has come in as a consultation and once this final report was issued, full council is asked to adopt as recommended. Full Council could not change that final version. It could only be accepted or rejected. Once adopted this would have to be adhered to.

In response to questions from Members including Councillors Spencer-Smith, Bishop, Tyler, Councillor David Levett advised that:

- The greenbelt area was a large area but they had taken part of it out but there was an overall gain of 9%;
- The new greenbelt was from the area of outstanding natural beauty on the A505 across towards Hitchin and back onto the Luton border, right down to St Paul’s Walden and Kings Walden;
- The remaining greenbelt was not available for development during the planning period. It was possible to build on greenbelt land if special circumstances existed such as for social housing or agricultural dwellings;
- With the new platform and software IT had been working throughout the latest consultation period;
- Our number was based on an objectively assessed need and based on a 20 year projected population growth and housing growth required to meet that population growth, changes and market influences. It was quite a complicated calculation. The figure given was predicted housing growth and was based on the period 2001-2011 on the actual number of homes that had been completed and not on the need. The baseline and time period was different and what was being represented, was different. The Secretary of State had already queried the figures and Secretary for State, James Brokenshire, when asked about the numbers confirmed there was no change in the government’s position. They were looking to produce 300,000 new homes every year for at least 10 years. There was a new standard formula on how the numbers would be calculated and they were querying why the 9600 was released as it did not compare like for like. A statement had been issued as the Inspector had already asked the question and there was an 18 page response as to why the numbers did not change.
- The planning application for 167 houses at Codicote could be looked at. Some developers were trying to push the applications through before the local plan was

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adopted, hoping to get away with higher numbers. The actual number was less than the developer had applied for. Once in the local plan, it would carry substantial weight. The Government advice prior to NPPF coming out aimed for a minimum density of 30 dwellings/hectare. The NPPF said the density was up to the Local Authority who would determine what was most appropriate for the site in question. There was no overall formula and each site was considered under its own merits and the density was calculated accordingly. Developers had appealed on the grounds that the Government stated this was what the country was doing. NHDC robustly defended policy as it was different to other places with vast amounts of open spaces. Every case had been won so far.

- The law is that before any Planning Application had been approved, even if met all the other criteria, one of the fundamental reasons for refusal was the lack of a Section 106 Agreement which had to be agreed between District and County Councils and Developers sometimes in conjunction with other authorities like water and sewerage. The Agreement had to be in place before Planning Permission was granted. If an agreement could not be reached, planning permission would not be given.

The Chairman thanked Councillor David Levett for his presentation.

46 WARD MATTERS AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS - MEMBERS' REPORTS

Audio recording – Start of Item – 1 hour, 27 minutes and 47 seconds

Universal Credit Rollout:

The government had made various amounts of significant funds available in the Universal Credit rollout. The County Council was, at the Health & Social Care Review Meeting, going to be looking at how they would be supporting people with the transfer into Universal Credit and their social care and looking at integration taking place between the NHS and those in social care. It would impact on the Council in assisted living as they were a 'careline' so these things would be examined and looked at and a report would be given at the next meeting.

Holwell Against CALA Traffic Action Group:

Councillor Spencer-Smith had a meeting with well-known pressure group Holwell Against CALA Traffic Action Group regarding the huge number of vehicles going through Holwell to build the site in Pirton. The land around village hall had to be re-turfed due to vehicles passing through and wooden posts had been strategically placed just to protect the area. Problem was due to the road being so narrow and rights of way.

The meeting closed at 9.05 pm