

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

SOUTHERN RURAL COMMITTEE

**MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNCIL OFFICES,
GERNON ROAD, LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY
ON THURSDAY, 7TH MARCH, 2019 AT 7.30 PM**

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors Claire Strong (Chairman), Steve Deakin-Davies (Vice-Chairman), John Bishop, Faye Frost, Cathryn Henry, Lisa Nash and Terry Tyler (arrived at 7.35pm).*

In Attendance: *Claire Morgan (Senior Communities Officer) and Melanie Stimpson (Democratic Services Manager)*

Also Present: *Sergeant Guy Westwood (Hertfordshire Constabulary) and 6 members of the public.*

47 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio Recording – Start time of Item – 17 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Barnard and Spencer-Smith.

48 MINUTES - 6 DECEMBER 2018

Audio Recording – Start time of Item – 45 seconds

The Minutes of the previous meeting were tabled at the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 6 December 2018 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

49 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio Recording – Start time of Item – 1 minute and 5 seconds

There was no notification of other business.

50 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio Recording – Start time of Item – 1 minute and 50 seconds

- (1) The Chairman welcomed those present to the meeting, especially those who had attended to deliver a presentation. Individuals were able to use a device to record the meeting or take photographs, but should ensure that the meeting was not disrupted
- (2) The Chairman advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting was being audio recorded;
- (3) 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. Any Member that wished to exercise a 'Councillor Speaking Right' had to declare this at the same time of the interest.

- (4) In addition to the public listed within the agenda, the Committee would also receive a presentation from Sergeant Guy Westwood on behalf of Hertfordshire Constabulary and Mrs Vicky Wyer on behalf of Churchgate Resurgence PB.

51 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio Recording – Start time of Item – 2 minutes and 10 seconds

At 7.35pm Councillor Terry Tyler entered the meeting.

Sergeant Guy Westwood delivered a presentation on behalf of Hertfordshire Constabulary.

The following points were highlighted:

- Various changes had been made to the Team;
- A new computer system 'Athena' had been installed which allowed communication with 11 other forces however there were teething problems;
- It was not possible to compare Crime figures and the accuracy of the figures was unknown due to the changes to the recording system;
- The classification of burglaries had changed being split into dwellings and non-dwellings and this had made it difficult to compare with last year's figures;
- Online crime recording meant there were more ways to report crime;
- Overlap of figures across the area affected the outcomes;
- Crime figures had increased by 12% overall across the county - there had been double recording on some of the crimes so the accuracy was unknown;
- Outcome rate increased over the year as the burglars were apprehended;
- There had been a reduction in business burglaries;
- The constabulary was trying to educate the public to secure their vehicles as car crime had increased;
- An increase in domestic abuse numbers was seen as positive as it meant that more cases were being reported;
- Not all cases of domestic abuse were progressed - work was needed to bring perpetrators to justice;
- There had been 3 robberies in Hitchin compared to 53 in North Hertfordshire this year however this might be due to knife crime which was uncategorised at present;
- Assault, both verbal and physical had increased;
- There had been a reduction in criminal damage – a lot of work had been done however there was more to do;
- Antisocial behaviour had decreased taking into consideration that more incidents were being reported;
- Presentations were being made to local schools regarding knife crime;
- Rural priorities were environmental, vehicle damage, domestic burglaries and anti-social use of vehicles however if there were other areas of concern that could be discussed with the public and Councillors in future;

In response to the presentation, questions were received from the following Councillors:

- Councillor Frost
- Councillor Tyler
- Councillor Strong

The following concerns were raised:

- Residents and Councillors had reported ongoing drug related crime in Offley and Lilley. There were some school-aged children and older children who had drugs on their possession and were not discreet about the fact.
- Younger children needed to be educated regarding knife crime.

Audio Recording – Start time of Item – 30 minutes and 22 seconds

Vicky Wyer of Churchgate Resurgence PB Group thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation, the main points of which were detailed below:

- New experienced-based economy was required and one that would give a reason for people to visit the town;
- NHDC held the freehold to Churchgate development area and was in a key position to be able to realise its potential;
- A considerable amount of time and money had already been spent and more was needed to conclude the matter;
- Surveys revealed overwhelmingly positive results concerning the need for revitalising the area and its potential;
- A mixed-use development with flexible sized retail on the ground floor would give adaptability to future trends;
- Rented residential accommodation on the upper floors would help to spread the risk and address local housing needs which included social housing and low income rental;
- Community hub focussed on the arts and wellness could provide an alternative site to St Albans and Welwyn;
- Improvement to riverside terraces and creation of riverside walks would make the area more attractive to tourists;
- Increased parking would generate more revenue;
- Introduction of new bus hub and/or park and ride scheme;
- A rejuvenated market with an independently operated street food hall could be transformative;
- Low rents, short leases and attractive appearance were key to success;
- North Herts towns should be well differentiated but any change had to play to their strengths;

Chairman thanked Mrs Wyer for her presentation.

Audio Recording – Start time of Item – 39 minutes and 38 seconds

No representative from Home-Start Hertfordshire was present.

Audio Recording – Start time of Item – 39 minutes and 57 seconds

Mr Edison Jefferies, Secretary of Breachwood Green Cricket Club thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding the grant application:

- Storage containers were sat on railway sleepers which had rotted. The containers were sinking into the ground and access to them was difficult;
- A concrete base was needed so they could be returned to their original position;
- Trying to future-proof the Social Club for future generations by having licenced facilities for those who used the club;
- Annual events were held to attract new members;

The Chairman thanked Mr Jeffries for his presentation.

Councillor Frost made a statement in support of the application.

Audio Recording – Start time of Item – 43 minutes and 15 seconds

No representative from Breachwood Green Village Hall was present.

Audio Recording – Start time of Item – 43 minutes and 30 seconds

Mr Chris White of FC Comets thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding the grant application:

- Run solely by volunteers;
- The club sought funds to purchase two new sets of metal goals;
- Funds had been raised for paying for weekly operational costs of the teams, such as kits and training and playing equipment;
- The cost of substantial one-off equipment such as goals was very difficult.
- The cost of normal season running costs was raised through subscriptions, sponsorship and fundraising events such as Christmas team photos and football prediction competitions.
- The goals would benefit a new in-take of around 30 children every year for the next 10 years.

In response questions were received from the following Councillors:

- Councillor Bishop
- Councillor Moody
- Councillor Deakin-Davies

The Chairman thanked Mr White for his presentation.

Audio Recording – Start time of Item – 50 minutes and 37 seconds

Mr John Rowlands, Treasurer and Trustee of Kimpton Folk Festival thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding the grant application:

- Promoted folk and music events throughout the year;
- To make folk music more inclusive to isolated and disadvantaged members of the public including tea and cake music concerts for the elderly, running music/singing and movement workshops at special needs schools;
- Funds required to help run the events on the afternoon of the folk festival including insurance, portaloos, bins, stage, signage, car park and sound engineers;
- Various workshops, stage performances and activities for adults and children;
- Events on the green and evening entertainment were self-funding;
- Fundraising events were held throughout the year;
- Promoted by social media, leaflets and posters.

In response questions were received from the following Councillors:

- Councillor Strong
- Councillor Bishop
- Councillor Frost
- Councillor Deakin-Davies
- Councillor Henry

The Chairman thanked Mr Rowlands for his presentation.

Audio Recording – Start time of Item – 1 hour and 1 minute

Julia Target and Renata Crowe of Knebworth Town Twinning thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding the grant application:

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- The KTA was hosting a 4-day cultural exchange in April 2019, with 37 visitors from Chatelaillon-Plage;
- The application was for funding to cover transport costs in the form of coaches/minibuses to travel to heritage sites in the local area;
- It developed personal, cultural and sporting relationships;
- The Knebworth Town Twinning arranged social and fundraising events amongst members and the local community to support cultural exchanges;
- French lessons were supported in the local village schools and a prize was awarded to the best student in each school;

In response a question was received from the following Councillor:

- Councillor Strong

The Chairman thanked Julia Target and Renata Crowe for their presentation.

52 GRANTS & COMMUNITY UPDATE

Audio Recording – Start time of Item – 1 hour, 11 minutes and 47 seconds

The Senior Communities Officer presented a report to advise the Committee of the current expenditure and balances of the Area Committee budgets; to inform the Committee of recent requests received for Area Committee Grant Funding, made by community groups and local organisations, which conformed to the Authority's Grants Policy approved by Cabinet on June 14th 2016; and to advise the Committee of the activities and schemes with which the Community Officer had been involved.

GRANT APPLICATION: HOME START HERTS

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

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

As no one was in attendance at the meeting for 'public participation' the Committee did not receive a presentation. However, the Senior Communities Officer noted that a good presentation had been delivered to the other area committees and had determined to award Home Start Herts a grant. There were two people on the waiting list and the grant would provide a volunteer to support a family for six months. This would provide a vast amount of support to these families and would be part funded by the County Council.

There was concern expressed by some Members of the Committee regarding how the grant accorded to the eligibility criteria:

The following Councillors took part in the debate:

- Councillor Bishop
- Councillor Henry
- Councillor Frost
- Councillor Nash
- Councillor Strong

RESOLVED:

That grant funding of £920 be awarded to Home Start Herts towards the cost supporting two families in need in the Southern Rural Area as outlined in 8.1.1 of the submitted report;

At 8.58pm the meeting was adjourned for a comfort break. The meeting resumed at 9.02pm.

Audio Recording – Start time of Item – 1 hour 26 minutes and 30 seconds

GRANT APPLICATION: FC COMETS

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

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

Councillor Frost made a statement.

RESOLVED:

That grant funding of £998 be awarded to FC Comets Football towards the cost of purchasing additional goals posts as outlined in 8.1.4 of the submitted report;

Audio Recording – Start time of Item – 1 hour 28 minutes and 0 seconds

GRANT APPLICATION: KIMPTON FOLK FESTIVAL

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

Regarding alternative options there alternative funding options considered in addition to those detailed in the report.

The following Councillors took part in the debate:

- Councillor Frost
- Councillor Henry
- Councillor Bishop
- Councillor Tyler
- Councillor Nash
- Councillor Strong

It was felt by some Councillors that the application could not be justified purely to reduce the cost of the ticket prices as income generated should be able to cover costs and make a surplus even if it meant charging for some of the activities on the day.

It was proposed by Councillor Tyler and seconded by Councillor Nash to offer £1,000 which on being put to the vote was lost.

Councillor Henry stated that the activities would not be free as the grant funding was paid for by Council Tax payers.

Subsequently Councillor Bishop allocated his Ward Member Budget to Kimpton Folk Festival.

RESOLVED:

That grant funding of £390 from Councillor John Bishop's Ward Member Budget to Kimpton Folk Festival towards the cost putting on a community event as outlined in 8.1.5 of the submitted report.

Audio Recording – Start time of Item – 1 hour and 36 minute and 29 seconds

GRANT APPLICATION: KNEBORTH TOWN TWINNING

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

Regarding alternative options there alternative funding options considered in addition to those detailed in the report.

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Councillor Deakin-Davies stated that he had a declarable interest as he was a member of Knebworth Twinning Association.

Councillor Nash stated that she had a declarable interest as she was the District Council representative on Knebworth Twinning Association.

The following Councillors took part in the debate:

- Councillor Henry
- Councillor Frost
- Councillor Strong
- Councillor Deakin-Davies
- Councillor Nash
- Councillor Tyler
- Councillor Bishop

Councillor Nash and Councillor Deakin-Davies stated that in addition to any funding awarded, they proposed to add each of their Ward Member Budget to the award. The Committee rejected this proposal and instead agreed to award the £1125 via £390 was from Councillor Lisa Nash's and £390 was from Councillor Steve Deakin-Davies' Ward Member Budget with the remaining amount from the central budget.

RESOLVED:

That grant funding of £1,125 be granted to Knebworth Town Twinning of which £390 was from Councillor Lisa Nash's and £390 was from Councillor Steve Deakin-Davies' Ward Member Budget, for support for the incoming visit from guests of the twinned town of Chatelaillon-Plage as outlined in 8.1.3 of the submitted report;

Audio Recording – Start time of Item – 1 hour, 50 minutes and 45 seconds

GRANT APPLICATION: BREACHWOOD GREEN CRICKET CLUB

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

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

RESOLVED:

That grant funding of £780 be granted to Breachwood Green Cricket Club towards the cost of maintenance of the Cricket Club Facilities to be split as follows: £265 from Councillor David Barnard's Ward Member Budget, £265 from Councillor Faye Frost's Ward Member Budget and £250 from the main development budget, as outlined in 8.1.6 of the submitted report.

Audio Recording – Start time of Item – 1 hour, 52 minutes and 33 seconds

GRANT APPLICATION: BREACHWOOD GREEN VILLAGE HALL

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

Regarding alternative options there alternative funding options considered in addition to those detailed in the report.

RESOLVED:

That grant funding of £1,248 be granted to Breachwood Green Cricket Club, of which £390 was from Councillor Claire Strong's Ward Member Budget, towards the purchasing of a defibrillator and training to use the machine as outlined in 8.1.2 of the submitted report;

Audio Recording – Start time of Item – 1 hour, 54 minutes and 43 seconds

GRANT APPLICATION: OFFLEY TENNIS CLUB

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

Regarding alternative options there were none proposed other than those presented.

The Senior Communities Officer noted that a grant application had been received subsequent to publication of the agenda for Offley Tennis Club who had requested £350 for a leaf blowing machine. As the amount requested was below £500 the grant could be awarded under delegated authority subject to the agreement of Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Ward Members. The Committee endorsed the application.

RESOLVED:

The Committee support the grant application of £350 to Offley Tennis Club for a leaf blowing machine, not included within the agenda, which could be determined under officer delegation.

In addition the Committee also

RESOLVED:

That the actions taken by the Community Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being for the Southern Rural Area be endorsed

REASON FOR DECISIONS:

To ensure the Committee is kept informed of the work of the Community Officer.

To inform Members of the financial resources available to the Committee – to identify the current budgetary situation by assisting in the effective financial management of the Area Committee's budget. This ensures that all actions are performed in line with the Authority's Financial Regulations, the Council's Constitution, and the guidance of the existing Grants policy as agreed by Cabinet in June 2016.

The awarding of financial assistance to voluntary organisations and the use of discretionary spending allows the Committee to further the aims of the Corporate Plan.

53 WARD MATTERS AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS - MEMBERS' REPORTS

Audio Recording – Start time of Item – 1 hour, 57 minutes and 27 seconds

Members gave verbal reports regarding the following:

- **East and North Herts NHS Trust**

Councillor Deakin-Davies had a meeting on 13th March with David Brewer to discuss the huge phlebotomy queues and also how they were working to improve the link between elderly hospital admissions and the County Council's support of the elderly care provision when hospital treatment was no longer required.

Councillor Deakin-Davies was to spend a day with Hertfordshire County Council within the next few weeks at the East and North Herts Trust NHS at Lister and QEII and also the Care Commissioning Group whose plans would be reviewed at that meeting.

- **Arts Council North Herts**

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Was to be dissolved in four weeks' time as funding had ceased and the last of their money had been spent. They were not prepared to embrace new commercial ideas of how to continue to promote the arts.

- **Knebworth Parish Council**

Councillor Nash and Councillor Deakin-Davies were at a meeting with Knebworth Parish Council and the two landowners of KB1, 2 and 4 where there would be hundreds of homes built. The concept of a charitable trust was being looked at. These existed to take care of the money that was paid to some of the landowners and Section 106 money and other negotiated grants to become a trust to provide for Knebworth in the future.

Prior to concluding the meeting the Chairman expressed appreciation, on behalf of the Committee, to Councillor Henry who had decided to not stand for election in May.

The meeting closed at 9.35 pm

Chairman