

**NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**LETCHWORTH COMMITTEE**

**MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNCIL OFFICES, GERON ROAD,  
LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY ON WEDNESDAY, 16TH OCTOBER, 2019 AT 7.30 PM**

**MINUTES**

**Present:** *Councillors Councillor Gary Grindal (Chairman), Councillor Helen Oliver (Vice-Chairman), Daniel Allen, Kate Aspinwall, Morgan Derbyshire, David Levett, Ian Mantle, Sean Prendergast, Sue Ngwala, Mike Rice and Adem Ruggiero-Cakir*

**In Attendance:** *Melanie Stimpson (Democratic Services Manager), Julie Williams (Electoral Service Manager), Simon Ellis (Development and Conservation Manager), Daniel Washington (Transport Policy Officer), Claire Morgan (Community Engagement Team Leader), Lea Ellis (Assistant Community Engagement Officer), Amelia McInally (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer) and Hilary Dineen (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager)*

**Also Present:** *At the commencement of the meeting approximately 12 members of the public, including 5 registered speakers.*

**19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

*Audio Recording – Start of Item – 52 Seconds*

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Terry Hone and Deepak Sangha.

Councillor David Levett had sent his apologies due to a clash in meeting dates and times for Letchworth Committee Meeting and the BID Annual General Meeting. However, Councillor Levett arrived at 20.10.

**20 MINUTES - 19 JUNE 2019**

*Audio Recording – Start of Item – 1 Minute 15 Seconds*

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 19 June 2019 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

**21 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS**

*Audio Recording – Start of Item – 1 Minute 32 Seconds*

There was no other business notified.

**22 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

*Audio Recording – Start of Item – 1 Minute 42 Seconds*

- (1) The Chairman thanked those who attended Town Talk and welcomed those present at the meeting, especially those who had attended to give a presentation in respect of grant applications;

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- (2) The Chairman thanked Hilary Dineen who had been the Officer administering Letchworth Committee for the last 12 years, for all of her hard work and welcomed Amelia McNally who would be clerking future Letchworth Committee Meetings;
- (3) The Chairman advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be audio recorded. That members of the public and the press may use their devices to film/photograph, or do a sound recording of the meeting. Please do not use flash and disable any sound notifications that may emit from their device;
- (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.

**23 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - KINGS COMMUNITY CHURCH / TOWN CENTRE CHRISTMAS CAFE**

*Audio Recording – Start of Item – 5 Minutes 18 Seconds*

Mrs Christine Wheatley, Kings Community Church, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding their application. She informed Members as follows:

- Wished to set up a Community Involvement run Christmas Café in Letchworth Town in conjunction with Letchworth Methodist Church.
- Would run the pop-up café on the 3 Saturdays prior to Christmas.
- Several organisations had shown interest and offered their support, including:
  - Citizens Advice Bureau
  - Home-Start
  - Best Before Café
- Provide a feel good community Christmas experience in a non-threatening environment....a safe place, where everyone would be welcomed.
- Perhaps run a free gift wrap service.
- Quiet Corner available for those people who struggle with Christmas Time.
- Children's activity, by way of a craft table.
- Provide a boutique food table
- Distribution of packs which would provide useful and beneficial information during holiday time in order that people have access to assistance if required:
  - Emergency numbers
  - Benefit Information
  - Opening Times for Food Banks
- Both The Salvation Army and Methodist Church had offered to play Christmas Carols.
- Any donations received would be split between The Salvation Army and The Need Project.

Mrs Wheatley thanked and congratulated the Community Engagement Team for all their hard work, provision of information and assistance.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Wheatley for her presentation.

**24 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - RESOLVE**

*Audio Recording – Start of Item – 11 Minutes 25 Seconds*

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Mr Joe Heeney, Resolve, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding their grant application as follows:

- Founder and CEO of Resolve.
- Started business in 2008 with a community grant of £500 from Hertfordshire Community Foundation.
- Abstinence based drug and alcohol treatment day service for adults.
- Support with substance, alcohol addiction and homelessness issues.
- Success had grown since Resolve ran a 16 Week long community engagement pilot project 4 years ago that North Herts had put together along with CVS, (Centre for Voluntary Services).
- Outgrown Westmill Community Centre in Hitchin, but now had a brand new bespoke building in Letchworth Town Centre – strategically and perfectly positioned, for which a ten year lease had been secured.
- It was the only organisation of it's type in the whole of the district.
- Approximately 80 percent of their team, including Mr Heeney himself, were recovering addicts – showing a wealth of experience and empathy for all of their clients.
- Looking for capital funding for the re-fit of the new property and assistance with legal costs.

In response to a question raised by a Member, Mr Heeney provided the following information:

- Whilst Resolve did provide a drop in service, they primarily ran structured group therapy sessions with qualified Counsellors.
- Opening hours were Monday to Friday, however the point of moving into their own space was to allow expansion of current provision.

The Chairman thanked Mr Heeney for his presentation.

## **25 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - HOWARD GARDEN SOCIAL AND DAY CARE CENTRE**

*Audio Recording – Start of Item – 18 Minutes 18 Seconds*

Mr Tony Page, Howard Garden Social and Day Care Centre, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding their grant application and provided the following information:

- Been the honorary Treasurer since September 2014.
- Organisation was set up 3 September 1953, last year celebrating it's 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary.
- Registered Charity employing 4 Part-time and 20+ volunteers.
- Day Care Service for older members of the community, (aged between 55 and 95)
- Safe place for isolated individuals, to provide carers with a much needed break.
- Over 140 Members.
- Building was leased from North Herts District Council
- £230 daily running costs.
- They relied heavily on donations and rent fees from other organisations that use the building.
- Building maintenance costs were now urgently required, including much needed Security Shutters to protect the outer doors which had been funded in 2016 by NHDC.

Questions and comments were made by:

Councillor Kate Aspinwall;  
Councillor Helen Oliver;  
Councillor Kay Tart; and  
Councillor Mike Rice.

The Chairman thanked Mr Page for his presentation.

**26 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - IMAJICA THEATRE COMPANY CIC**

*Audio Recording – Start of Item – 24 Minutes 15 Seconds*

The meeting paused whilst two members of Imajica Theatre Company provided the Committee with an entertaining sample of their cowboy pantomime production.

Ms Samantha Hough, Theatre Company CIC, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave both a verbal and power point presentation regarding their grant application.

The presentation explained how the theatre company that had been running for four years, created interactive immersive musicals, interactive workshops and a theatre-in-education programme for the younger audience, which shared environmental and educational messages.

Imajica Theatre were requesting funds for their community pantomime programme that was taking place at St Christopher School Auditorium Theatre on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> December respectively.

The Chairman thanked Ms Hough for the presentation.

**27 WOOF N WAG**

*Audio Recording - Start of Item – 35 Minutes 51 Seconds*

Two Members of Woof n Wag thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding their grant application, providing the following information:

- A relatively new organisation, which was set up in October 2018.
- Provided dog training and behavioural service.
- Their work supported people who both owned and were thinking of getting a dog. Support also provided to those individuals that were nervous of dogs.
- Founded within community routes, affordable and free to those unable to pay.
- Strong health and physical benefits to owning a dog – positive mental health.
- 250 users of their site were currently catered for, of which 100% come from North Hertfordshire District, the vast majority coming from Letchworth.
- The field location that had been provided by The Heritage Foundation, had been unused for a number of years so required a lot of investment in both time and money spent to make it a safe and secure environment for all concerned.
- They wished to create a sensory garden, which would include the planting of shrubs that had been shown to reduce stress levels in dogs.

In response to Member's queries, the Committee were informed:

- That the location of their site was on the Stotfold road, this being part Hertfordshire Boundary and part Bedfordshire boundary, but their aim was to fully service North Hertfordshire; and
- A 5 Year Lease was currently in place, however, negotiations were underway, in conjunction with The Heritage, to extend that lease for a further 25 years.

The Chairman thanked Woof n Wag for their presentation.

**28 GRANT APPLICATION - RESOLVE**

*Audio Recording – Start of Item – 49 Minutes 46 Seconds*

**RESOLVED:** That grant funding of £5,000 be awarded to RESOLVE to assist with costs toward setting up utilities in their new town centre premises.

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

**29 GRANT APPLICATION - HOWARD GARDEN SOCIAL AND DAY CARE CENTRE**

*Audio Recording – Start of Item 50 Minutes 17 Seconds*

Councillor David Levett declared a declarable interest in the Grant Application for Howard Garden Social and Day Care Centre, he remained in the room but took no part in the vote.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the Communities Engagement Team would provide Howard Garden Social and Day Care Centre with information to assist with the possibility of an application for funding through a Community Facility Capital Investment Grant to have CCTV installed;
- (2) That grant funding of £1,500 be awarded to Howard Garden Social and Day Care Centre to install new security shutters; and
- (3) Howard Garden Social and Day Care Centre contact Civic Trust to investigate the possibility of additional funding.

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

**30 GRANT APPLICATION - IMAJICA THEATRE COMPANY**

*Audio Recording – Start of Item – 53 Minutes 34 Seconds*

**RESOLVED:** That grant funding of £1,450 be awarded to Imajica Theatre Company to assist with the December Community Pantomime.

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

**31 GRANT APPLICATION - WOOF N WAG**

*Audio Recording – Start of Item – 54 Minutes 35 Seconds*

**RESOLVED:** That grant funding of £1,451 be awarded to Woof n Wag to build a sensory garden for dogs and humans.

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

**32 GRANT APPLICATION - KINGS COMMUNITY CHURCH / TOWN CENTRE CHRISTMAS CAFE**

*Audio Recording – Start of Item – 55 Minutes 28 Seconds*

**RESOLVED:** Subject to a suitable venue being sourced and confirmed that grant funding of £1,000 be awarded to Kings Community Church for a joint project to run a Christmas Café in Letchworth Town Centre.

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

### 33 REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES AND POLLING DISTRICTS

*Audio Recording – Start of Item – 1 Hour 18 Seconds*

The Democratic Services Manager and The Electoral Services Manager presented the report on the Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations Consultation.

The following appendices accompanied the report:

Appendix A – Polling District Schedule - identified the polling districts, polling places and polling stations for the entire District, along with justification as to any proposed changes.

Appendix B – Consultation Responses

Appendix C – Maps (including District Boundaries)

The Democratic Services Manager explained to the Committee that it was a legal requirement for the Council to conduct a full review every 5 years of UK Parliamentary Polling Districts and Polling Places and that the current review must conclude by 31 January 2020. She further explained that the review was of polling districts and polling places, however, it was accepted that polling stations were linked and therefore the review had incorporated the stations.

It was reported that 6 consultation responses had been received in relation to Letchworth.

The Democratic Services Manager informed of a change of Polling Station Place in relation to Lordship Farm School, which had served two wards. Whilst various alternatives had been investigated, Cloisters Hall had been selected as the most suitable relocation.

The Democratic Services Manager referred Members to Appendix C of the report explaining district boundary changes.

The following Members asked questions and took part in discussion:

Councillor Kate Aspinwall;  
Councillor David Levett; and  
Councillor Mike Rice.

The Electoral Manager informed that requests had been made from the electorate to remove Lordship Farm School as a Polling Station due to an essential school closure on polling days, which was wholly unsatisfactory.

Both The Democratic Services Manager and Electoral Manager confirmed that when Polling Cards were distributed, it would be clearly and boldly marked on the card that there had been a change of Polling Station and where the new Polling Station was located.

A Member of the Committee suggested that, to be entirely sure that all voters who may be affected in respect of a Polling Station change of place, that a sign be put on the door of the Polling Station used previously directing people to the new location.

The Chairman thanked The Democratic Services Manager and The Electoral Services Manager for their presentation.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That Members agreed to draw electorate attention when out canvassing to any change in Polling Station location.
- (2) That Polling Places, as illustrated in the Returning Officer's Proposals set out in Appendices A and C be designated.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced a change to the timing of compulsory reviews of UK Parliamentary Polling Districts and Polling Places. The compulsory review must commence and conclude between 1 October 2018 and 31 January 2020 (inclusive).

#### **34 ANNUAL UPDATE ON SECTION 106 OBLIGATIONS FOR LETCHWORTH COMMITTEE**

*Audio Recording – Start of Item – 1 Hour 14 Minutes 9 Seconds*

The Development and Conservation Manager presented his report entitled Annual Update on Section 106 Obligations for Letchworth and provided the following information:

The Development and Conservation Manager explained that unlike previous reports, the format of the information presented had been changed to more accurately reflect the diminishing role of discretionary Section 106 funds, and the changing restrictions around the collection and distribution of funds.

The Development and Conservation Manager drew Members' attention to table 1 on page 61 within the report - Summary of Financial Information for the last financial year. In Letchworth, no new legal agreements had been signed, which had illustrated that S106 Unilateral Undertakings and Legal Agreements were becoming less frequent as they could only apply to planning permissions of 11 dwellings or more. Table 2 was also highlighted in respect of unspent allocated funds, drawing attention to the affordable housing development of 47 flats in Leys Square. The trigger point of spending would be on first occupation of those dwellings. The Development and Conservation Manager reported that NHDC had an extremely efficient monitoring system for all on-going developments within the area.

The Development and Conservation Manager introduced the new Transport Officer, Daniel Washington, to the Committee and explained that he would be looking at ways in which the sustainable contributions element of the discretionary funding could be used. The new Transport Officer would also co-ordinate meetings with Hertfordshire County Council to assist in the process.

The Transport Officer informed the Committee of some of the already processed, new applications, and stated that he was looking for other schemes that required spending. He stated that a pilot scheme had commenced in Royston, however, he invited Members to make contact with any opportunities or ideas that they may have.

The Transport Officer stated that he had set himself a target which was to have all monies allocated or spent by the end of 2020.

The Development and Conservation Manager further reported:

- That at the next meeting in December 2019, Members of Cabinet would receive a draft planning obligations document that would replace the 2006 document.
- That after the Cabinet meeting in December 2019, a business case for a Small Sites Infrastructure Levy would be investigated.
- That the report set out the current position with respect to changing legislation, how future planning policy would perhaps reflect that, and outlined progress of a revised

strategy to seek wider community and Ward Member involvement in identifying relevant projects.

The following Members asked questions and contributed to discussion:

Councillor Daniel Allen;  
Councillor Gary Grindal;  
Councillor Helen Oliver;  
Councillor Ian Mantle; and  
Councillor Mike Rice

The Conservation and Development Manager explained that with regard to S106 funding to a Community Centre, this was not restricted to new centres, the definition had been stretched slightly to mean anything that improves the capacity and use of a facility.

It was confirmed by The Conservation and Development Manager that there was no Pitch Sport Funding available left to spend in Letchworth, however, The Community Engagement Team Leader explained that with respect to a specific surface replacement requirement, an application for grant funding would be encouraged at the next Letchworth Committee Meeting.

The Conservation and Development Manager answered further questions as they arose.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the content of the report entitled Annual Update on S106 Obligations for Letchworth be noted;
- (2) That a report shall continue to be presented on Section 106 contributions to the Letchworth Committee on an annual basis; and
- (3) That, other than where a contribution has been negotiated for a specific purpose or project, Ward Members of the area where the Section 106 Obligation or Unilateral Undertaking funding is generated and the Area Committee be consulted prior to funding being allocated away from that area.

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION:**

- (1) To ensure that there is a robust system for negotiating and managing Section 106 Obligations and Unilateral Undertakings, that records activity for each financial year and is placed in the public domain.
- (2) To ensure that the process is kept under constant review and Member scrutiny and that the risk associated with this activity is managed in an appropriate manner.

**35 GRANTS & COMMUNITY UPDATE**

*Audio Recording – Start of Item – 1 Hour 35 Minutes 33 Seconds*

The Community Engagement Team Leader informed the Members as follows:

- Engage North Herts Facebook group had been set up, specifically for community groups within the district, in order that they may share information, best practice and up and coming events.
- The formation of the Food Provision Group which brought together representatives of organisations working toward tackling food poverty including:
  - Best Before Café in Letchworth



- Hitchin Food Rescue Hub
  - Local Churches; and
  - School Holiday Scheme – Make Lunch
- Previous Grant recipient KIP Education had secured their first sessions at Letchworth School.
  - Councillor Surgeries would take place on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of each month.

**RESOLVED:** That the Committee endorses the actions taken by the Community Engagement Officer in order to promote greater community capacity and well-being for Letchworth.

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

### 36 WARD MATTERS AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS - MEMBERS' REPORTS

*Audio Recording – Start of Item – 1 Hour 41 Minutes 19 Seconds*

In respect of Letchworth BID, Councillor David Levett informed the Committee as follows:

- BID Annual General Meeting had taken place that evening;
- BID AGM looked to elect a new board that night;
- Changed Government Member Structure meant for the first time there as a confirmed 16 Members elected to the Board;
- There had been a lot of involvement from the Business Community in Letchworth at the meeting;
- In respect of Anti-Social Behaviour - BID had just funded a new online data system named DISC; and
- There had been a rise in break-ins within the town.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Levett for his update.

Councillor Mike Rice reported that Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) was holding their Annual General Meeting on 23 October at 2.30 in The Ickniel Centre.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Rice for the information.

Councillor Gary Grindal asked for the Committee's indulgence and re-presented the Member's attention, to what was becoming a fairly regular discussion topic - Illegal Parking on Verges and Pavements.

The following Members took part in a lengthy discussion:

- Gary Grindal;
- D Levett;
- Ian Mantle;
- Sean Prendergast;
- Mike Rice; and
- Daniel Allen

and raised the following points:

- How we can encourage enforcement and take serious action.
- Push Council to fully investigate - take serious action.
- Encourage people to report to Council's Legal Department if the perpetrator is caught parking illegally.

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- Longer Term Strategies put in place and educate.
- Cost effective prevention rather than enforcement.
- Flexibility around land conditions put in place as an incentive.
- Lack of parking facilities available.
- Increased cost of fine.

The meeting closed at 9.30 pm

Chairman