

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

LETCHWORTH COMMITTEE

MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES. GERNON
ROAD, LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY
ON TUESDAY, 7TH JANUARY, 2020 AT 7.30 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Gary Grindal (Chair), Daniel Allen, Kate Aspinwall, Morgan Derbyshire, Ian Mantle, Sean Prendergast and Adem Ruggiero-Cakir*

In Attendance: *Claire Morgan (Community Engagement Team Leader), Louise Symes (Strategic Infrastructure and Projects Manager), Marie Pritchett (Parking Projects Officer), Lea Ellis (Assistant Community Engagement Officer) and Amelia McNally (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer)*

37 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio Recording – Start of Item – 1 Minute 10 Seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors:

Helen Oliver;
Daniel Allen; (arrived at 19.54)
Terry Hone;
David Levett;
Sue Ngwala; and
Mike Rice.

38 MINUTES - 16 OCTOBER 2019

Audio Recording – Start of Item – 1 Hour 20 Minutes 27 Seconds

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 16 October 2020 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

39 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – Start of Item – 3 Minutes 36 Seconds

There was no other business notified.

40 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – Start of Item – 3 Minutes 41 Seconds

- (1) The Chairman announced that the Committee were not quorate that evening, however, this would not stop the meeting going ahead, but any decision required would be made under a delegated decision after the meeting.

The Letchworth Committee Meeting became quorate on the arrival of Councillor Daniel Allen at 19:54.

- (2) The Chairman welcomed those present at the meeting, especially those who had attended to give a presentation;
- (3) The Chairman informed the Committee of all those in attendance who were speaking, presenting and requesting grant funding under Public Participation;
- (4) The Chairman informed Members that there had been a very positive public response to the Christmas Tree in Letchworth's Broadway Gardens many compliments had been received. The Christmas Light Switching On Ceremony had been a very well managed exercise and the Chairman praised all of those who were involved its organisation.
- (5) The Chairman advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be audio recorded;
- (6) 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.

41 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - ACCESSABLE

Audio Recording – Start of Item – 7 Minutes 39 Seconds

Katie Dyton, AccessAble, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation, assisted by a PowerPoint presentation, about AccessAble. Ms Dyton drew Members' attention to the following:

- Ms Dyton managed the AccessAble Partnership in Letchworth.
- AccessAble was originally named DisabledGo and was set up in 2002 by Dr. Gregory Burke as a result of his own experiences. Dr Burke had developed and produced a surveying template of all disability groups in order to create guides.

Research had showed that:

- 98% were more likely to visit a place if access information was available beforehand;
- 4 out 5 people checked access information on line before visiting a new place;
- 80% of the provided information was deemed inaccurate or vague;
- 81% of people checked the venue's own website first;
- 9 out of 10 people felt anxious about visiting a place for the first time;
- 76% of people would not visit a place if there were unable to obtain access information; and
- The Social Mission of AccessAble was to empower disabled people in order that they could access their community to the full by providing essential detailed accessibility information.
- The Department of Workplace and Pensions latest figures showed that there were an estimated 13.3 million disabled people in the UK.
- 45% of people in the UK have a disability, (being 1 in 4 households that are affected);
- There are 34.5 million carers across the UK
- An estimated 17 million people across the country would benefit from having access to information.

- There were currently 80 detailed access guides across Letchworth;
- Access guides were objective, factual and user driven;
- All user guides were standardised and quality assured; and
- There were just over 350 Partners and 1.5 million unique users of the AccessAble website

Ms Dyton provided Members with a detailed demonstration, explaining the level of detail of the AccessAble website for venues in Letchworth and highlighted the following:

- The website aesthetics could be changed to suit an individual user which included altering the font, layout, colour, size of text and language;
- The website and mobile app worked in conjunction with “Screen Reader” software;
- There were featured access guides on the website;
- Access routes took into consideration tactile markings, dropped kerbs and signage;
- Website included filtered venue accessibility features;
- Information was provided as to whether staff in a particular venue had disability training and;
- A large amount of information was provided in relation to a venue’s parking which included photographs, the number of blue badge holder spaces, the cost of parking and the distance from the car park to the venue’s entrance.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Gary Grindal; and
- Councillor Sean Prendergast.

Ms Dyton provided the following information in response to questions raised:

- AccessAble was funded by the Letchworth BID and they were dependent on funding and;
- Statistics on how many people visited the website could be provided on request.

The Chairman thanked Ms Dyton for her presentation.

42 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY FESTIVAL COMMITTEE

Audio Recording – Start of Item - 23 Minutes 31 Seconds

Hilary Kemp, Chair of Letchworth Festival, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal and Power Point presentation in respect of their grant application. She provided the Members with a detailed background to the organisation and highlighted the following:

- The festival was entirely volunteer run.
- The festival ran for two weeks and would take place from 20 June 2020 – 5 July 2020;
- The grant request was for £2,000 to assist with the cost of funding the Park Live Music Event that would take place on the last Sunday of the festival;
- Suggestions of ways in which the Festival could support and promote the aims of NHDC would be welcomed;
- 2020 was Hertfordshire’s Year of Culture, an opportunity to link up with other parties across the County to provide combined events for which initial discussions had already taken place. Further ideas by way of people or supply of venue that would bring support in order to deliver would be welcomed;
- The festival was a two-week celebration of local life;
- The festival promoted Letchworth organisations and local talent which helped to showcase their work;

- The festival aimed to promote a broad range of activities that the Community had expressed an interest in;
- The event helped to endorse a greener and cleaner Letchworth; and
- Other funding was being sought from arts and culture, Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation and local sponsors.

The following Members made comment and took part in discussion:

Councillor Gary Grindal;
Councillor Daniel Allen; and
Councillor Kate Aspinwall

On behalf of the Members of the Letchworth Committee, the Chairman wished the Letchworth Festival every success and thanked Ms Kemp for her presentation.

After discussion and debate it was:

RESOLVED: That grant funding of £3,000 be awarded to Letchworth Garden City Festival Committee to assist with the cost of setting up staging for next years' arts and culture.

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

43 LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY BID MANAGER

Audio Recording – Start of Item - 42 Minutes 10 Seconds

Mr Chris Wilson, Letchworth Garden City BID Manager, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding the issues and activities in Letchworth Garden City Town Centre.

Mr Wilson informed the Members that he had been in his role of Letchworth Town Centre Manager/BID Manager for 9 months and whilst it had been a difficult financial year, he felt very positive going forward. Mr Wilson recapped on last years' events as follows:

- "The Christmas Lights Switch On" had been a great success with a footfall count of 23,700 people, with some retailers reporting 154% rise in sales that evening.
- The World Food Festival had also been a huge success in terms of entertainment.

Mr Wilson reported that there had been ongoing problems in the town with respect to anti-social behaviour and he had been working very closely with both the Police and Mr John Marshall, Community Protection at NHDC. Mr Wilson informed the Committee that a real time on-line app had been launched called DISK which had assisted greatly with the "fast-track" apprehension of criminals.

Mr Wilson stated that a new map of Letchworth Town Centre had been produced and he was currently in the process, with the assistance of The Heritage Foundation, endeavouring to make the map digital and more interactive.

Mr Wilson informed Members of the Committee of the planned Calendar of Events due to take place in Letchworth that year. The first of these being on 18 January, which was the start of 10 weeks of activities that would occur every Saturday up until 21 March 2020.

The following Members made comment and asked questions:

Councillor Gary Grindal; and

Councillor Daniel Allen

In response to questions, Mr Wilson responded as follows:

- There was a general overall positive feel in Letchworth amongst retailers and bar owners, stating that things have picked up and that there was a lot more working together as a business community; and
- That it was only when a National Company showed an interest and approached the Letting Agents that the Town Centre Manager would be informed as to what new business would take over any vacant premises.

The Chairman thanked Mr Wilson for his presentation.

44 GRANT POLICY REPORT

Audio Recording – Start of Item – 54 Minutes

The Community Engagement Team Leader presented the report entitled Community Grants Policy Review and highlighted the following:

- The report outlined the proposed changes to the grants policy;
- The process had been simplified;
- The policy was last updated in 2016, and since then, the Area Committee Budgets had been reduced by 20% year on year;
- Organisations with charitable status, voluntary sector groups, community groups, Community Interest Companies, Community Interest Organisations, Schools, Academies, Business Improvement District Groups, Parish and Town Councils were now able to apply for grants;

The following Members made comment and asked questions:

Councillor Ian Mantle

RESOLVED: That the proposed review of the Community Grants Policy and criteria be noted.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET: That the Community Grants Policy, criteria and outline consultation process be approved by Letchworth Committee, subject to the following amendments:

- That the word “quarterly” be removed from paragraph 4.3 of Section 4 - Application Submission Process; and
- An addition be made to the report in respect of Paragraph 6 – Terms of the Award, requesting feedback to the specific Area Committee that had initially awarded the grant funding.

REASON FOR DECISION: The awarding of grant funding awards to organisations, charities and voluntary groups, and the use of grant budgets devolved to Area Committees allows the Authority to further its aims and overarching Priorities of the Council and District.

NB. The Consultation on the Grants Policy remains open for any further comment until midday 21 January 2020.

45 NHDC PARKING STRATEGY DRAFT PARKING OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

Audio Recording – Start of Item – 59 Minutes 56 Seconds

The Strategic Infrastructure & Projects Manager and The Parking Projects Officer presented the report entitled NHDC Parking Strategy Draft Parking Operational Guidelines and highlighted the following:

- The North Hertfordshire District Council Parking Strategy 2019-2031 was adopted by Cabinet in January 2019.
- Stake Holder workshops had been held leading up to the adoption of the Strategy and there had been a lot of engagement with Key Stake Holders and Members to formulate the policy of the strategy.
- The purpose of the Strategy Document was to detail how the Council proposed to implement the Policy framework.
- An Action Plan was contained within the Strategy.
- New opportunities to manage the parking stock across the District and generate additional income had been included in the draft Parking Operational Guidelines, which included:
 - Other Services in Council Car Parks;
 - Charging for On-Street Parking;
 - Employee Parking Schemes and;
 - Sale of Permits to Non-Residents in Controlled Parking Zones.
- The North Hertfordshire District Council Parking Operational Guidelines document should be read alongside the Parking Strategy.
- Consultation was taking place with key stake holders.
- It was important that the Parking Operational Guidelines remained a living document in order to ensure it provided a flexible approach to emerging issues.
- The Parking Issues Reporting Pack allowed members of the public to report parking issues.
- The Reporting Pack sought to educate members of the public on parking related issues and different types of parking controls in order to ensure relevance and met the corporate objectives of the Council.
- Applicants must keep a log of parking issues over a four week period in order to allow for the severity to be assessed.
- 80% of residents must agree with the parking issue.
- A similar report pack was in use at Hertfordshire County Council.

The following Members made comment and asked questions:

- Councillor Kate Aspinwall; and
- Councillor Gary Grindal

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Draft North Hertfordshire District Council Parking Operational Guidelines at Appendix A be noted; and
- (2) That the Draft North Hertfordshire District Council Parking Issues Reporting Pack 1 and Part 2 at Appendix B and C be noted.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:

- (1) That the Draft North Hertfordshire District Council Parking Operational Guidelines at Appendix A be considered and adopted;
- (2) That the Draft North Hertfordshire District Council Parking Issues Reporting Pack 1 and Part 2 at Appendix B and C be considered and adopted;

- (3) That delegated authority be given to the Service Director - Regulatory to approve minor amendments and format changes to the draft Parking Operational Guidelines as required in consultation with the Executive Member and Deputy for Planning and Transport;
- (4) That officers proceed with the work associated with the key projects listed in the Parking Strategy Strategic Action Plan using the Parking Operational Guidelines to implement the policy framework.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS: The draft Parking Operational Guidelines will provide the necessary guidance and assessment criteria for the Parking Strategy policy framework for managing parking across the District in a most cost efficient way that accords with the Council's Corporate Objectives and its Medium Term Financial Strategy.

NB. *The Consultation on the Parking Strategy Draft Parking Operational Guidelines remains open for any further comment until midday 21 January 2020.*

46 GRANTS & COMMUNITY UPDATE

Audio Recording – Start of Item – 1 Hour 12 Minutes 38 Seconds

The Assistant Community Engagement Officer presented her report and informed Members of the Letchworth Committee as follows:

There had been extremely positive feedback from The Community Christmas Café for which the Committee had provided funding. The Heritage Foundation had made donation of a shop, this had opened on the three Saturdays prior to Christmas Day. Due to it's great success the Café was opened once again on the Saturday after Christmas, (28 December 2019). An email of thanks from the organisers that detailed the facts and figures of the accomplishment was read out. There was a strong chance that the Community Christmas Café would open again in 2020.

The owners of the fruit and vegetable stall in Letchworth Garden Square had made a generous contribution, along with a local butchers on Christmas Day. The Howard Day Centre opened in order that Christmas meals were prepared for approximately 10 people who would have otherwise been on their own. Both Councillor Daniel Allen and Councillor David Levett had supported the event at the Howard Centre on Christmas Day.

The Assistant Community Engagement Officer provided Members with the Budget figures for Letchworth Committee stating that the remaining funds available for that civic year was £11,080.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the budgetary expenditure, balances and carry forwards from the Discretionary Budgets be noted;
- (2) That the actions taken by the Community Development Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being for Letchworth Garden City be endorsed.

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

47 GRANT APPLICATION - LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY FESTIVAL COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 7th January, 2020

RESOLVED: That grant funding of £3,000 be awarded to Letchworth Garden City Festival Committee to assist with the cost of setting up staging for next years' arts and culture.

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

48 WARD MATTERS AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS - MEMBERS' REPORTS

Audio Recording – Start of Item – 1 Hour 19 Minutes 58 Seconds

No Ward matters were raised by Members.

The meeting closed at 8.55 pm

Chair