

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

BALDOCK AND DISTRICT COMMITTEE

**MEETING HELD IN THE
BALDOCK COMMUNITY CENTRE, SIMPSON DRIVE, BALDOCK
ON MONDAY, 27TH JANUARY, 2020 AT 7.30 PM**

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Michael Weeks (Vice-Chair), Steve Jarvis, Jim McNally, Michael Muir and Tom Tyson*

In Attendance: *Louise Symes (Strategic Infrastructure and Projects Manager), Claire Morgan (Community Engagement Team Leader), Marie Pritchett (Parking Projects Officer), Ashley Hawkins (Community Engagement Officer) and Hilary Dineen (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager)*

Also Present: *At the commencement of the meeting approximately 10 members of the public, including registered speakers.*

29 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 23 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Val Shanley (Chair).

30 MINUTES - 7 OCTOBER 2019

Audio Recording – 28 seconds

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 7 October 2020 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Vice - Chair.

31 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 43 seconds

There was no other business notified.

32 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 48 seconds

- (1) The Vice-Chair welcomed those present at the meeting, especially those who had attended to give a presentation;
- (2) The Vice-Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be audio recorded;
- (3) Members were reminded to make declarations of interest before an item, the longer reminder about this and speaking rights was set out under Chair's Announcements on the agenda.

33 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - BALDOCK TOWN YOUTH FOOTBALL CLUB

Audio recording – 1 minute 45 seconds

Prior to the item being discussed Councillor Michael Weeks declared a declarable interest in that his grandson was a member of the Baldock Town Football Club. He advised that he would take no part in the discussion or any decision regarding this organisation.

Mr Juan Cowell, Chairman, Baldock Youth Football Club, thanked the Vice-Chair for the opportunity to address the committee in support of their grant application and informed Members of the following:

- This was a chartered club;
- It catered for boys and girls aged between 6 and 18 years;
- They required the grant funding to assist with equipment and training aids;
- They had to find additional funding to pay for new equipment required by the Football Association;
- They had sponsors who helped pay for the kit;
- It would be difficult to get to the end of this year in credit.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Michael Muir;
- Councillor Jim McNally;
- Councillor Tom Tyson;
- Councillor Steve Jarvis.

In response to questions Mr Cowell advised:

- They currently had 16 teams involving 263 children;
- A new girls team would start play next season;
- They were looking to increase the number of teams;
- They were constantly raising funds through tombolas, quiz nights and a local tournament;
- It was estimated that they would have a shortfall of £2,200 at the end of the year;
- Most players came from Baldock and surrounding villages, with about 40 players coming from Letchworth, Hitchin, Stevenage and Arlsey;
- The previous girls team failed because the person looking after the team left;
- The FA had requirements requiring the amount of training and equipment available to each team;
- They trained at the sports centre and played at schools and the cricket ground;
- Currently each player paid £40 per year, although it cost £137.60 per player;
- Fees would be increased next year.
- They were looking at how they could support those less well off financially.

The Vice-Chair thanked Mr Cowell for his presentation.

34 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - ASHWELL PLAY GROUP

Audio recording – 15 minutes 37 seconds

Ms Merry Smith and Ms Barbara Wolfe, Ashwell Play Group thanked the Vice-Chair for the opportunity to address the Committee in support of their grant application and informed Members of the following:

- They were asking for grant funding to assist with marketing campaign and to help with increased hall hire costs;
- The Play Group had been going for 45 years and was managed by volunteer Trustees;
- They were looking to attract children from outside the village so that they could have consistent numbers at sessions;
- To increase numbers of attendees they would need to have the appropriate number of staff who had been trained to the appropriate level and need to do some marketing;
- Over the years the number of staff had varied;
- They currently had 18 children on the books;
- The requested £1.500 would be matched from their own funds.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Jim McNally;
- Councillor Tom Tyson;
- Councillor Steve Jarvis.

In response to questions Ms Smith and Ms Wolfe advised:

- They held fund raising activities each year including the Village Winter Wonderland, Quiz Night, Duck Race and car boot sales which raised about £4.500 per year;
- They were looking for alternative funding streams;
- They had £9,000 reserves;
- They wanted to be more viable, non profit making and to promote a high quality service as cheaply as possible;
- They held regular in touch days with schools to help the children's transition to school;
- They met at Ashwell Village Hall;
- The 2016 Ofstead rating for the Playgroup was good;
- They were working with the Early Childhood Team to improve services.

Members suggested that they approach local businesses such as Days of Ashwell for sponsorship and consider supermarket schemes such as Tesco's Blue Chip scheme. They also suggested that they should approach County Councillors for funding.

The Vice-Chair thanked Ms Smith and Ms Woolfe for their presentation.

35 COMMUNITY GRANTS POLICY REVIEW

Audio recording – 35 minutes 31 seconds

The Community Engagement Team Leader presented the report entitled Community Grants Policy Review and drew attention to the following:

- The report outlined the proposed changes to the grants policy;
- The process had been simplified;
- The policy was last reviewed in 2016;
- Paragraph 8.2.1 outlined changes to the eligibility criteria;
- Parish and Town Councils and Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) were now eligible to apply for grants but only if it provided additionality;
- The 2016 Policy stated that applicants were ineligible for funding if they had other funding from NHDC within 2 years. This would no longer apply under the new policy;
- These changes would encourage a variety of organisations to apply;
- The new criteria was similar to that of other local authorities and;
- Cabinet had approved two proposals relating to community grants which included the creation of a one-off District-wide budget of £10,000 in 2020/21.

The following Members asked questions and took part in the debate:

- Councillor Michael Muir;
- Councillor Tom Tyson;
- Councillor Michael Weeks;
- Councillor Jim McNally;
- Councillor Steve Jarvis.

In response to questions the Community Engagement Team Leader advised:

- That schools could apply for funding but only for activities that provided additionality;
- That each application would be considered by Members on its merit.

Members were concerned that:

- The eligibility criteria and therefore the number of applications would expand but the amount of money would remain static;
- That Parish Councils could raise money via a precept whereas the District Council had limited funds available;
- That in allocation of grant funding Committees should give due cognisance to Parished/Unparished areas.

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

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET: That the criteria and outline consultation process be approved, subject to the following comments:

- That the ability for Parish Councils to apply for grant funding would increase the number of applicants, whilst the budget remained static;
- That additional pressure would be put on those committees with Parished areas;
- That the District Wide Budget of £10,000 be supported;
- That in allocation of grant funding, due cognisance be made that Hitchin and Letchworth Committees were not Parished;
- That the Policy, in respect of Parish Council eligibility to apply for grant funding, be reviewed in 2 years.

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.

36 GRANT APPLICATION - BALDOCK TOWN YOUTH FOOTBALL CLUB

Audio recording – 59 minutes 39 seconds

Councillor Michael Weeks had previously declared a declarable interest in that his grandson was a member of the Baldock Town Football Club. He advised that he would take no part in the discussion or any decision regarding this organisation.

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Steve Jarvis;
- Councillor Michael Muir

Councillor Steve Jarvis proposed that £350 be taken from the Weston and Sandon Budget; Councillor Jim McNally proposed that £950 be taken from the Baldock East and Baldock Town budgets in the normal proportions.

RESOLVED: That, subject to the agreement of Councillor Val Shanley, grant funding of £1,250 be awarded to Baldock Town Youth Football Club to assist with costs for new equipment for the club including kits, goal posts, footballs, bibs, cones, tables and gazebos in the following proportions:

- Weston and Sandon £350
- Baldock Town £684
- Baldock East £216

REASON FOR DECISION: 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.

37 GRANT APPLICATION - ASHWELL PLAY GROUP

Audio recording – 1 hour 2 minutes 37 seconds

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Steve Jarvis;
- Councillor Michael Muir;
- Councillor Jim McNally;
- Councillor Tom Tyson.

Councillor Tyson proposed that £500 be taken from the Weston and Sandon Budget; Councillor McNally proposed that £200 be taken from the Baldock East, Baldock Town and Weston and Sandon budgets in the normal proportions.

RESOLVED: That, subject to the agreement of Councillor Val Shanley, grant funding of £700 be awarded to Ashwell Play Group to assist with venue hire and publicity costs in the following proportions:

- Arbury £500
- Weston and Sandon £32
- Baldock Town £128
- Baldock East £40.

REASON FOR DECISION: 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.

38 NHDC PARKING STRATEGY DRAFT PARKING OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

Audio recording – 1 hour 7 minutes 4 seconds

The Strategic Infrastructure and Projects Manager and Parking Project Officer presented the report entitled NHDC Parking Strategy Draft Parking Operational Guidelines and drew attention to the following:

- These guidelines were prepared following the adoption of the Parking Strategy in October 2019;
- The aim was to present a report, together with the comments from Area Committees to Cabinet in March 2020;

- This was a high-level document that provided guidelines to Officers in order to deliver the Strategy;
- It was seen as a living document and it followed the same framework as the Strategy;
- It considers on-street parking and the possible sale of tickets to park in Controlled Parking Zones in area of low take up;
- It included a parking issues reporting pack, which gave a structure for the public to make reports of parking issues;
- The public would be asked to report issues over a 4 week period;
- This would enable the Council to understand times of stress regarding parking.

The following Members asked questions and took part in the debate:

- Councillor Michael Weeks;
- Councillor Tom Tyson;
- Councillor Steve Jarvis;
- Councillor Jim McNally;
- Councillor Michael Muir.

In response to questions the Strategic Infrastructure and Projects Manager and Parking Projects Officer advised:

- That they were working on an online version of the reporting pack;
- The reporting pack would help officers;
- The reporting pack was based on the version used successfully by the County Council;
- The reporting pack would provide a lot of data;
- The comments of the Area Committees would be considered.

Members concerns regarding the draft Parking Issues Reporting Pack and Operational Guidelines included:

- The reporting pack seemed over complicated and not user friendly;
- There should be an easier way to feed back information;
- Some problems only affected very small areas and this was not the way to provide solutions;
- There should be a facility to upload photographs;
- If people can only complete part of the reporting pack it should not invalidate the information given;
- Feedback should be sought from Councillors following adoption of the guidelines regarding parking issues in Baldock;
- There did not seem to be any connectivity between the document and the Local Plan.

Members made the following comments in respect of the local Parking Strategy:

- The Parking Strategy for Baldock was last completed 6 years ago and needed to be reviewed;
- The Committee needed a timeline for review that had a degree of certainty;
- Proposed growth in the Town will only increase traffic and make the current situation worse;
- The transport sustainability issues now and following new development should be considered now rather than wait for the parking review;
- Enforcement of parking was often not regular or strong enough;
- There was an unrealistic expectation about the number of people who would use alternative methods of transport.

In respect of the local parking strategy the Strategic Infrastructure and Projects Manager advised:

- They had not had available staff, however they were now progressing the work programme;
- They were currently working on the Royston review;
- It was unlikely that the Baldock review would take place in the next year;
- Key safety issues could be addressed;
- There was only one Parking Projects Officer and there was a need to manage her time and budget;
- The Parking Strategy would be reviewed as part of the Local Plan.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:

- (1) That the following comments of the Baldock and District Committee be taken into account when considering recommendations (2) – (5) below:
 - (i) The reporting pack seemed over complicated and not user friendly;
 - (ii) There should be an easier way to feed back information;
 - (iii) Some problems only affected very small areas and this was not the way to provide solutions;
 - (iv) There should be a facility to upload photographs;
 - (v) If people can only complete part of the reporting pack it should not invalidate the information given;
 - (vi) Feedback should be sought from Councillors following adoption of the guidelines regarding parking issues in Baldock;
 - (vii) There did not seem to be any connectivity between the document and the Local Plan.
- (2) That, subject to consideration of the comments in (1) above, Draft North Hertfordshire District Council Parking Operational Guidelines at Appendix A be considered and adopted;
- (3) That, subject to the comments in (1) above, the draft North Hertfordshire District Council Parking Issues Reporting Pack Part 1 and Part 2 at Appendix B and C be considered and adopted;
- (4) 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 Executive Member for Planning and Transport.
- (5) 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 DECISIONS: 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.

39 GRANTS & COMMUNITY UPDATE

Audio recording – 56 Minutes 42 seconds and 1 hour 39 minutes 31 seconds

The Community Engagement Officer presented the report entitled Grants and Community Update and drew attention to the following:

Budgets

The Committee currently had £3.470 available for grant funding.

There were no plans to remove any balances remaining in Area Committee budgets at the end of the Civic Year.

Baldock Community Fireworks

The Baldock Community Fireworks was held for the first time at St Marys School on Saturday 9th November.

Despite atrocious weather on the night of the event, the firework display was well supported with more than 1500 spectators attending the show.

Car parking was a bit of an issue.

As well as being a fantastic community event, the firework display also generated over £3.6k profit to be shared between St Marys PTA and local charities.

Councillor Jim McNally advised that there were some lessons for next year's event including access and egress and the siting of the PA equipment.

Baldock Christmas Fayre

The Baldock Christmas Fayre was held on Baldock High Street on Saturday 7th December.

The event was extremely well supported by the people of Baldock and passed without incident.

Members commented that this had been a marvellous event but they had received comment that there were no craft stalls this year/

Councillor Jim McNally advised that they had tried something new this year, but there was room to incorporate a more traditional element in the High Street next year.

Future Events

Councillor Jim McNally advised that the following events would take place:

- 23 February - Baldock Beast;
- 7 June - Big Lunch;
- 15 June - Cycle Challenge;
- 5 December – Christmas Fayre.

The Baldock Community Events Forum also helped with the school fete, Fireworks Night, Balstock Festival and the Rat Run and were looking at the possibility of putting on a disco type event.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Committee endorses the actions taken by the Community Engagement Officer to Promote greater community capacity and well-being for Baldock;
- (2) That the volunteers supporting the Baldock Events Forum be thanked for their hard work in organising the events in Baldock throughout the year.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) To ensure the Committee is kept informed of the work of the Community Officer.
- (2) To inform Members of the financial resources available to the Committee. It draws attention to 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.

40 WARD MATTERS AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS - MEMBERS' REPORTS

Audio recording – 1 hour 48 minutes 38 seconds

County Councillor Locality Budgets

Councillor Michael Muir reminded Members that County Councillors have a budget of £90,000 to pay for highways issues.

The meeting closed at 9.24 pm

Chair