

# **NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

## **LETCHWORTH COMMITTEE**

### **MEETING HELD AS A VIRTUAL MEETING ON WEDNESDAY, 10TH MARCH, 2021 AT 7.30 PM**

#### **MINUTES**

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

**In Attendance:** *Lea Ellis (Assistant Community Engagement Officer) and Anna Gouveia (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer)*

**Also Present:** *At the commencement of the meeting approximately 6 members of the public, including registered speakers.*

#### **44 WELCOME AND REMOTE/PARTLY REMOTE MEETINGS PROTOCOL SUMMARY**

*Audio recording – 2 seconds*

The Vice-Chair welcomed everyone to this Letchworth Area Committee meeting that was being conducted with Members and Officers at various locations, communicating via audio/video and online. There was also the opportunity for the public and press to listen to and view proceedings.

The Vice-Chair invited the Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer to explain how proceedings would work and to confirm that Members and Officers were in attendance.

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer undertook a roll call to ensure that all Members, Officers and registered speakers could hear and be heard and gave advice regarding the following:

The meeting was being streamed live onto YouTube and recorded via Zoom.

Extracts from the Remote/Partly Remote Meetings Protocol were included with the agenda and the full version was available on the Council's website which included information regarding:

- Live Streaming;
- Noise Interference;
- Rules of Debate;
- Voting; and
- Part 2 Items

Members were requested to ensure that they were familiar with the Protocol.

Voting would be done using the 'raise hand' button.

The Vice-Chair of the Letchworth Area Committee, Councillor Helen Oliver, started the meeting proper.

**45 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

*Audio recording – 3 minutes 14 seconds*

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor David Levett, and also from Alastair Stewart, Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation.

**46 MINUTES - 11 MARCH 2020 TO 9 DECEMBER 2020**

*Audio Recording – 3 minutes 44 seconds*

The Vice-Chair advised that since the beginning of March, when NHDC started to hold meetings remotely, it had not been possible to approve Minutes of meetings. Minutes could now be approved with the electronic signature of the Vice-Chair being applied following approval.

There were 4 sets of Minutes to agree:

- 11 March 2020;
- 17 June 2020;
- 14 October 2020;
- 9 December 2020.

Councillor Helen Oliver proposed, Councillor Daniel Allen seconded and it was:

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the Minutes of the Meetings of the Committee held on 11 March, 17 June, 14 October and 9 December 2020 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Vice-Chair;
- (2) That, with the authorization of the Vice-Chair, her electronic signature and initials be attached to the Minutes approved in (1) above.

**47 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS**

*Audio recording – 5 minutes 59 seconds*

There was no other business notified.

**48 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

*Audio recording – 6 minutes 2 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 as well as filmed. The audio recordings would be available on Mod.gov and the film recording via the NHDC YouTube channel.
- (3) The Vice-Chair 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.

## 49 HERTFORDSHIRE CONSTABULARY

*Audio recording – 1 hour 1 minute and 27 seconds*

Sergeant Stephen Oliphant, Hertfordshire Constabulary, thanked the Vice-Chair for the invitation to address the Committee and provided Members with a verbal presentation including:

- Sergeant Oliphant was currently supported in the Letchworth policing team by four Police Constables and five Police Community Support Officers, with one Constable vacancy which was currently advertised;
- Priorities focused on during the last year were anti-social behaviour linked to drug-related activity (which covered people smoking drugs in public areas and dealing drugs) and speeding which was a local and national issue currently;
- To combat the above, a number of stop searches were carried out, arrests had been made for drug-related activity, and recently a closure order had been done targeting people that were committing crime, using a particular address;
- Worked with partners in Housing and NHDC issuing several Community Protection Warning Notices and Full Notices to help moderate people's behaviour;
- Daily patrols to combat Covid breaches supported by a government grant across the district;
- Overall crime for Letchworth had decreased by 27% compared to the previous year, and the total recorded crime was 1776 offences. A summary of crime figures compared to the previous year was provided as follows:
- Criminal damage had decreased by 25% with 223 offences recorded; burglaries had decreased by 40% with 97 reports; 52 dwelling burglaries had been reported this year as opposed to 103 last year (representing a 50% decrease); drug-related offences had seen an increase of 22% up to 83 which reflected the additional work and patrols put in place to target offenders and which had resulted in positive outcomes; 6 offences of robbery had been reported which was a decrease of 73% on last year; theft-related offences reported (318) were down 42%; Town Centre shop theft was down 46%; vehicle crime had seen a marginal increase with 140 offences compared to 134 last year.

The following Members commented and asked questions:

- Councillor Terry Hone;
- Councillor Daniel Allen;
- Councillor Helen Oliver.

The Police were thanked for their proactive social media posts, for example, informing local residents via Facebook of work to address speeding in Norton village.

Sergeant Oliphant responded to questions as follows:

- The 4 Es: Engagement, Explain, Encourage, Enforce were being followed in Letchworth as part of National Police Council guidance in relation to Covid breaches. This enabled the Police to follow a stepped process when faced with a breach of the Covid regulations. If a negative response was received a Fixed Penalty Ticket could be issued.
- It was acknowledged that reported crime had gone down due to the coronavirus pandemic, for example, certain types of offences had not been committed as frequently, such as dwelling burglaries, due to people working from home;
- A definitive figure for prosecutions could not be given at this moment in time as people would appear in court via different routes. The courts had been closed for a significant period of time during the pandemic and there was a backlog of people awaiting their court appearances.

The Vice-Chair thanked Sergeant Oliphant for his presentation.

**RESOLVED:** That further details be forwarded by email to the Committee from Sergeant Oliphant on the current rates of prosecution.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To inform the Committee of local matters relating to crime and disorder.

## 50 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - OPEN ART BOX CIC

*Audio recording – 7 minutes 11 seconds*

Ms Christina Armstrong and Ms Anji Archer, Open Art Box CIC, thanked the Vice-Chair for the opportunity to address the Committee in support of the grant application and gave a presentation with slides including:

- Open Art Box started at the end of 2019 with the intention of operating art workshops for people living with early stage dementia around Hertfordshire;
- During the pandemic, funding was granted by Hertfordshire Community Foundation to set up home art workshops to enable Open Art Box CIC to continue its work in the community;
- In September 2020, a collaboration started with North Herts Museum, funded by an Arts Council grant, to deliver packs related to artefacts. These were delivered to 15 participants in Stevenage and 15 in North Herts;
- The weekly home art workshop packs had continued and there was now a waiting list;
- Feedback from participants and carers had been extremely positive;
- Participants work was available to view online;
- Funding was being sought for a further 10 weeks/200 boxes, and it was hoped people would be able to come out of lockdown and get involved in groups again soon.

Ms Anji Archer added:

- In addition to dementia, participants often had complex needs and the art boxes helped to support their wellbeing.

The following Members commented:

- Councillor Sean Prendergast;
- Councillor Helen Oliver.

Members congratulated Open Art Box CIC for its great work supporting people with dementia in the community.

The Vice-Chair thanked Ms Armstrong and Ms Archer for their application.

## 51 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - TRANSITION TOWN LETCHWORTH/ WOOLGROVE FAMILY LEARNING ALLOTMENT

*Audio recording – 23 minutes 17 seconds*

Ms Diane Ketcher, Transition Town Letchworth/ Woolgrove Family Learning Allotment, thanked the Vice-Chair for the opportunity to address the Committee in support of the grant application.

Ms Ketcher gave a presentation with slides including the following:

- The application for funding by Transition Town Letchworth was to develop and maintain a half-plot allotment on the Woolgrove site on the Jackmans Estate;
- The plot had initially been supplied by North Herts District Council;
- A Heritage Foundation grant had been received for equipment and wood to construct 8 raised beds;
- The project would support families without gardens in learning how to grow their own food;
- It had been a difficult year with lockdown but a volunteer had helped to take care of the site and grow food;
- The aim of the project was to increase health and wellbeing for families in the area.

The following Councillors commented and asked questions:

- Councillor Daniel Allen;
- Councillor Helen Oliver.

Comments from Members included:

- The benefit to families was acknowledged and Transition Town Letchworth were thanked for their work on this project.

Ms Ketcher replied to questions as follows:

- The Growers Market in the Town Centre had been a useful point of contact in the past for enquiries by people wishing to grow their own food, however the future of this was currently unclear due to the pandemic.

The Vice-Chair thanked Ms Ketcher for her application.

## **52 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - WILBURY AND ICKNIELD SCHOOL PARENTS ASSOCIATION**

*Audio recording – 34 minutes 28 seconds*

*NB Councillor Daniel Allen declared an interest in that his children attended the school and confirmed that he would not take part in the debate or vote on this item.*

Mr Glyn Holt, of Wilbury and Icknield School Parents Association (WISPA) and Ms Julia Sonander of Transition Town Letchworth, thanked the Vice-Chair for the opportunity to address the Committee in support of the grant application.

Mr Holt gave a presentation with slides including the following:

- This was a Transition Town Letchworth project hosted by WISPA as the main beneficiary;
- Terracycle was a company which recycled hard-to-recycle plastics to divert them from landfill and incineration. WISPA had joined as many of the free schemes as possible. This meant they could recycle items such as crisp packets, baby food pouches, bread bags, etc.
- The benefits of the project were that it was a step towards a circular economy and in addition a small income was received for the waste returned;
- The project was now in its second year and it had recycled nearly half a tonne of waste and raised nearly £1000 for WISPA;
- The drop off point was in the centre of Letchworth at Morrisons and more sites were planned;

- The waste was currently sorted at the school's PTA shed which was quite cramped;
- A search for an alternative site had been undertaken in consultation with local agencies however no site had been identified so an eco-cabin at the school was being proposed;
- The eco-cabin would provide more space and enable more volunteers to join the team;
- The wider benefits would be to provide an eco-hub which could be used by the schoolchildren to participate in sorting waste, managing profits, etc.;
- Meetings, workshops and pre-loved uniform sales could also be held there and links between the school and wider community could be built.

The following Members commented:

- Councillor Terry Hone;
- Councillor Sue Ngwala;
- Councillor Helen Oliver.

Comments from Members included:

- Councillor Terry Hone, as County Council Portfolio Holder for Waste Management, was supportive of this work and happy to be contacted if needed;
- The Government strategy was moving towards the supplier of the packaging paying for the disposal of packaging;
- It was good to see this being looked at as the vast majority of residual waste collected at kerbside was packaging;
- Superdrug was looking into recycling blister packs for medication;
- The need for more space was acknowledged;
- This project would provide children with numerous learning opportunities;
- Transition Town Letchworth were thanked for their work in this area.

Mr Holt replied to questions from Members as follows:

- The project was hosted to benefit the whole of Letchworth;
- Pens which were collected were passed on to Stonehill School to be recycled;
- Various other recyclables were passed on to a collection point in Hitchin.

Ms Julia Sonander added:

- Highfield School was going to start collecting crisp packets and it was hoped that a network could be built with other schools once WISPA had the capacity to act as a hub.

The Vice-Chair thanked Mr Holt and Ms Sonander for their application.

## **53 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - NORTH HERTS DIVERSITY AND CULTURE**

*Audio recording – 47 minutes 57 seconds*

Ms Kava Johnson, North Herts Diversity and Culture, thanked the Vice-Chair for the opportunity to address the Committee and provided Members with a verbal presentation in respect of her organisation and its activities including:

- A series of workshops had been held online as part of Black History Month in 2020 including creative writing and afro haircare and had been well attended and received good feedback from participants;
- There was a project in the pipeline to be run with primary schools initially, for students and teachers. This would take the form of a series of workshops looking at how to speak to young people about race, faith and other topics;

- North Herts Diversity and Culture was looking for schools which would want to partner with them to deliver these;
- Some events which had been delayed from October were planned to be held in May as 'Beyond Black History Month', although the timing of this was uncertain due to lockdown.

The Vice-Chair thanked Ms Johnson for her presentation.

#### **54 LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY HERITAGE FOUNDATION**

*Audio recording - 1 hour 14 minutes 14 seconds*

The Assistant Community Engagement Officer advised that Mr Alastair Stewart, Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation had been unable to join the Committee meeting due to being unwell but he had provided a written update to the Assistant Community Engagement Officer which she read out as follows:

- The Foundation had joined the Kickstart programme and over the coming months would be recruiting a number of young people to various roles across the organisation to support them to gain future employment;
- Planning was underway for the cinema to reopen when safe to do so;
- Standalone Farm was also planning to open when safe to do so;
- An Arts Council grant application had been successful and the Museum team were developing a mobile exhibition that could go out into the community;
- The Gallery was developing a programme and would be opening when safe to do so;
- The Foundation was working with Letchworth Schools on a funding application to support a summer holiday programme for children who were eligible for free school meals;
- They had facilitated the use of the Grammar School as a Covid vaccination centre and also units at the business centre by Sainsburys.

The Vice-Chair thanked the Assistant Community Engagement Officer for delivering the update on behalf of the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation.

#### **55 LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY BID MANAGER**

*Audio recording – 1 hour 16 minutes 35 seconds*

The Assistant Community Engagement Officer gave a verbal update on behalf of Mr Chris Wilson, Letchworth Garden City BID Manager regarding the issues and activities in Letchworth Garden City Town Centre, including:

- The re-opening of Letchworth Town Centre was anticipated on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2021 when it was hoped that approximately 81% of the town would be re-opening. Multi-agency working had been really effective and all agencies including NHDC were thanked for their support with this;
- Hospitality premises would try to open up with outside seating where space permitted and NHDC officers had been assisting with the necessary licensing requirements;
- A new initiative, 'Parking Perks', was being introduced which would refund parking charges for spending in local shops and they were trying to get shops on board. If this went well it could be rolled out across North Herts which could be useful in light of the proposed increases in parking charges.

The Vice-Chair thanked the Assistant Community Engagement Officer for giving an update on behalf of the Letchworth Garden City BID Manager.

## 56 GRANT APPLICATIONS AND COMMUNITY UPDATE

*Audio recording – 1 hour 19 minutes 39 seconds*

The Assistant Community Engagement Officer presented the report entitled Grants and Community Update, together with the following appendix:

- Appendix 1 – 2020/21 Financial Year Budget Sheet

She advised that:

- The report contained some feedback from projects funded in the past including a breakdown of the people who participated in the horticultural project at Greencare;
- Greencare had recently started up again with social distancing as the participants had really missed being able to work at the allotment;
- settle had offered them a second piece of land off The Crescent and Greencare was recruiting more volunteers and doing some more fundraising;
- The Settlement had been running as many courses as possible online which had enabled some people from outside the local area to participate;
- The Holocaust Memorial Day had been a fantastic event with lots of positive feedback and had attracted a global audience;
- The poet in residence from David's Bookshop had been inspired to write a poem following the event;
- The event was available to view on YouTube and planning was underway for next year's event which would be both virtual and physical.

The following Member commented on the report:

- Councillor Daniel Allen.

It was noted that the YouTube video of the Holocaust Memorial Day event had been viewed over 440 times so far.

Councillor Helen Oliver proposed, Councillor Daniel Allen seconded and it was:

**RESOLVED:** That the actions taken by the Community Engagement Team to promote greater community capacity and well-being for Letchworth be endorsed.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To ensure the Committee is kept informed of the work of the Community Engagement Team.

## 57 GRANT APPLICATION - OPEN ART BOX CIC

*Audio recording – 56 minutes 44 seconds*

Councillor Sean Prendergast proposed, Councillor Morgan Derbyshire seconded, and it was:

**RESOLVED:** That grant funding of £2,500 be awarded to Open Art Box CIC for home workshop packs.



**58 GRANT APPLICATION - TRANSITION TOWN LETCHWORTH/ WOOLGROVE FAMILY LEARNING ALLOTMENT**

*Audio recording – 58 minutes 21 seconds*

Councillor Morgan Derbyshire proposed, Councillor Daniel Allen seconded, and it was:

**RESOLVED:** That grant funding of £400 be awarded to Transition Town Letchworth for the Woolgrove Family Learning Allotment project.

**59 GRANT APPLICATION - WILBURY AND ICKNIELD SCHOOL PARENTS ASSOCIATION (WISPA)**

*Audio recording – 59 minutes 47 seconds*

*NB Councillor Daniel Allen declared an interest in that his children attended the school and confirmed that he would not take part in the debate or vote on this item.*

Councillor Terry Hone proposed, Councillor Sue Ngwala seconded, and it was:

**RESOLVED:** That grant funding of £2000 be awarded to Wilbury and Icknield School Parents Association (WISPA) for the purchase of a portacabin to store and sort recycling (includes deduction of the planning application fee (£234), as detailed in paragraph 8.1.3 of the report of the Assistant Community Engagement Officer), subject to any necessary permission being granted, if required, as detailed in paragraph 8.1.3 of the report of the Assistant Community Engagement Officer.

**60 WARD MATTERS AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS - MEMBERS' REPORTS**

*Audio recording – 1 hour 25 minutes 14 seconds*

There were no ward matters or outside organisation updates from Members.

The meeting closed at 8.57 pm

Vice-Chair