

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

SOUTHERN RURAL COMMITTEE

**MEETING HELD AS A VIRTUAL MEETING
ON THURSDAY, 29TH OCTOBER, 2020 AT 7.30 PM**

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Claire Strong (Chair), John Bishop, George Davies, Steve Deakin-Davies, Ian Moody, Sam North and Terry Tyler*

In Attendance: *Simon Ellis (Development and Conservation Manager), Claire Morgan (Community Engagement Team Leader), William Edwards (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer) and Matthew Hepburn (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer)*

Also Present: *At the commencement of the meeting approximately 1 member of the public, including registered speakers.*

13 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Audio Recording – 0 minutes 9 seconds

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that it 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 and view proceedings.

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer undertook a roll call of Members and Officers to ensure that they could hear and be heard and gave the following advice.

The meeting was being streamed live on the Council's You Tube channel and also recorded via Zoom. If live streaming failed the meeting would adjourn. If the live stream could not be restored within a reasonable period then the remaining business would be considered at a later date.

Please stay in view of the camera at all times.

If for any reason the meeting was not quorate an Officer would notify attendees by interjecting the meeting. The meeting would adjourn immediately. Once the meeting was quorate the meeting would resume. If connection could not be restored within a reasonable period, then the remaining business would be considered at a later date.

If a remote Member lost connection the Chair may adjourn the meeting for a short period to enable connection to be re-established. If the Chair did not adjourn the meeting the Member would be deemed to have left the meeting at the point of failure and be deemed to have returned at the point of re-establishment. Only Members present for the entirety of debate and consideration of an item are entitled to vote.

Mobile phones and other noise emitting devices should be muted and the mute button on tablets and computers should be muted when not speaking.

When requested to vote, voting would be via the Green tick for "Yes", Red Cross for "No" and Blue Raise Hand for "abstain" functions.

The Chair, Councillor Claire Strong, started the meeting proper.

14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 3 minutes 15 seconds.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Barnard, Faye Frost, and Lisa Nash.

15 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 3 minutes 28 seconds.

There was no other business notified.

16 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 3 minutes 30 seconds.

- (1) The Chair welcomed Tom Brindley who was present at the meeting to make a presentation in support of a grant application;
- (2) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be audio recorded as well as filmed and that recordings would be available via Mod.Gov and the NHDC YouTube Channel.
- (3) The 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.

17 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 4 minutes 12 seconds.

Mr Tom Brindley, Kings Walden Parish Council (KWPC), thanked the Chair for the opportunity to address the Committee in support of their grant application as follows:

- KWPC incorporated Breachwood Green which lay directly in the landing and take-off flight paths of Luton Airport;
- KWPC was not anti-airport but did believe that the airport should be held to account and should adhere to the regulations imposed by Planning and Environmental regulators;
- KWPC monitored the impact of the airport in terms of traffic, light, air and noise pollution;
- KWPC in the past had borrowed equipment from the airport to do so;
- The equipment borrowed from the airport was only available for a few weeks at a time and was not always made available;
- KWPC felt it was necessary to gather all-year round independent data on noise pollution and resolved to purchase its own monitoring equipment;
- KWPC had approached various organisations for funding including Luton Airport; the bulk of funding would come from KWPC reserves;
- The data collected by this equipment would be of benefit to many organisations including NHDC;
- The equipment will be fixed normally at the recreation ground in Breachwood Green but can be mobile and operated at any location;

- KWPC was asking for £1500 towards the initial £9500 capital funding of the total project cost.
- If funding was received from the Committee KWPC would be able to purchase software which would like any noise data to individual aircraft flights.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Sam North
- Councillor Terry Tyler

In response to questions Mr Brindley advised:

- The data collected by the airport was taken from monitoring equipment positioned further away from the airport than Breachwood Green and where aircraft would be at higher altitudes;
- The data collected by the airport did not provide any data from the noisiest settlement closest to the airport that is Breachwood Green;
- The data collected by KWPC would be independent;
- Parish Councils and independent bodies interested in monitoring the airport had expressed interest in data from the proposed equipment;

The Chair thanked Mr Brindley for his presentation.

18 GRANTS & COMMUNITY UPDATE

Audio Recording – 11 minutes.

The Community Engagement Team Leader presented the report entitled Grants & Community Update together with the appendix below:

- Appendix 1 – 2019/20 Financial Year Budget Sheet

She drew attention to the following:

- There was only one grant application to be considered at this meeting which was from Kings Walden Parish Council;
- Advice on sound monitoring equipment had been taken from District Council Environmental Health Officers to be included in the report;
- The Environmental Health Officers consulted had felt that specialist knowledge was required to extrapolate information from the data gathered by monitoring equipment;
- Item 10 in the Report indicated that £8,899 was available to spend; If Members were minded to allocate £1,500 to Kings Walden Parish Council it would leave £7,399 in the budget.

The Chair noted that aircraft noise had meant business conducted in the village hall in Breachwood Green needed to be paused momentarily while aircraft passed overhead.

The Chair noted that in view of the continual expansion of the airport that data gathered by Kings Walden Parish Council would assist them in putting together a picture of the noise pollution in the village of use for future dialogue with the airport.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Sam North

The Community Engagement Team Leader advised the following in response to questions:

- The number of complaints of noise pollution in connection with Luton Airport in the Kings Walden Parish area was unknown.

RESOLVED: That the actions taken by the Community Engagement team to promote greater community capacity and well-being for the Southern Rural area be endorsed.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

- (1) To ensure the Committee is kept informed of the work of the Community Engagement Team.
- (2) This report is intended 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 January 2020.
- (3) The awarding of financial assistance to voluntary organisations and the use of discretionary spending allows the Committee to further the aims of the Council Plan.

19 GRANT APPLICATION - KINGS WALDEN PARISH COUNCIL

Audio Recording – 16 minutes 26 seconds.

It was proposed by Councillor Claire Strong, seconded by Councillor Terry Tyler and:

RESOLVED: That grant funding of £1,500 be awarded to Kings Walden Parish Council for the purchase and installation of sound monitoring equipment as outlined in paragraph 8.1 of the report.

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

20 SECTION 106 AND UNILATERAL UNDERTAKINGS

Audio Recording – 17 minutes 59 seconds.

The Development and Conservation Manager presented the report entitled Section 106 and Unilateral Undertakings with the following appendices:

- Appendix 1 – Funds Received in Southern Rural Area during Financial Year 2019/20
- Appendix 2 – Current Held Funds Based on Parish Areas – Southern Rural

The Chair accepted the Development and Conservation Manager's apologies for the misuse of the word 'Royston,' in the report.

The Development and Conservation Manager drew attention to the following:

- Cabinet had adopted a new Supplementary Planning Document in July to replace the document from 2006. This new document will not come in to full effect until the full Local Plan is in place;

- The Supplementary Planning Document envisioned a Section 106 process rather than a Community Infrastructure Levy;
- Cabinet in December would consider a report on whether it is worth pursuing a small-site Community Infrastructure Levy;
- An Infrastructure Funding Statement would be published in December as an annual record of all Section 106 activity in the District;
- Annual area committee updates would continue alongside the Infrastructure Funding Statement;
- A white paper on planning reforms coming forward had discussed introducing a National Infrastructure Levy in place of Section 106 agreements. The role of District Councils in this arrangement was not yet clear;
- Until the law changes the current Section 106 procedure had to be pursued;
- Paragraph 8.4.5 listed funds available in the villages: Ickleford had a lot of funds as a result of the LS1 development, and Pirton as a result of the Cala Homes and Gladman's developments;
- These villages had the most funds available as they are not in the Green Belt;
- Villages still in the Green Belt did not see large developments and therefore had limited funds from Section 106 arrangements.

The following Members raised questions and took part in the debate;

- Councillor Sam North
- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Terry Tyler
- Councillor John Bishop
- Councillor Ian Moody
- Councillor George Davies

In response to questions raised the Development and Conservation Manager advised that:

- Money allocated to the County Council was not included in the report;
- Sums of money were awarded to Herts County Council arising from the LS1 development to be spent by Bedfordshire County Council towards education provision;
- Funds distributed outside of the District were allocated on the basis of geographical location; in LS1 for example the nearest school was in Bedfordshire;
- Infrastructure funding was not always best spent in accordance with administrative boundaries;
- Future developments east of Luton would naturally result in some funding being allocated to the Luton authority for highways infrastructure;
- There was Section 106 funding from the NES2 development still available;
- Projects with established programmes of work could approach the Planning Obligations and Compliance Officer to discuss drawing on Section 106 funds;
- Proximity was naturally a key consideration in allocating Section 106 funding;
- Plans for developments in Roundwood would progress slowly until the Local Plan advances;
- More information would be updated on the website concerning Roundwood and Section 106 funding as it arrives;
- Recommendation 2.3 in the Report referred to funds to be allocated from developments out of the wards in which the developments occur; these allocations required approval from Members.
- The current Section 106 regulations prohibited fundraising from developments of under 10 dwellings; small-site Community Infrastructure Levy would prevent developers avoiding contributions by building under the 10 dwelling limit.

- Following discussion Members were keen that the Committees support of a Small Development Sites Community Infrastructure Levy be placed on record,

It was moved by Councillor Claire Strong, seconded by Councillor Sam North and:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the content of the report entitled Annual Update on S106 Obligations for the Southern Rural Committee be noted;
- (2) That the Development and Conservation Manager be requested to present a report regarding Section 106 contributions to the Southern Rural Committee on an annual basis setting out full records of all Section 106 activity for the preceding financial year and which reflects changes in legislation and practice.
- (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.
- (4) That the Executive Member for Planning and Transport be advised that the Southern Rural Committee supports the introduction of a Small Development Sites Community Infrastructure Levy to capture the cumulative impact of small developments on local infrastructure.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

- (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.

21 WARD MATTERS AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS - MEMBERS' REPORTS

Audio recording – 49 minutes 3 seconds.

Members gave updates on the following ward matters and outside organisations:

Food Provision & Free School Meals

Councillor Sam North gave his thanks to Hitchin Lavender, Morrison's Letchworth, Ickleford Community Larder and various residents in Ickleford for their support of a free school meals programme to assist vulnerable children in Ickleford and Holwell.

Councillor Terry Tyler gave his thanks to Stevenage Borough Council for opening the St. Nicholas Centre to the young residents of Great Ashby to receive free school meals.

The Community Engagement Team Leader advised that:

- The Coronavirus Community Support Fund was available to offer grant funding to projects.
- The NHDC Food Provision Network also co-ordinated work between organisations and shared best practice with groups providing food in the District.

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- DEFRA funding was coming up to an amount of approximately £500 per organisation in the District.
- New organisations could get in touch with the community engagement team by contacting her directly or to the community@north-herts.gov.uk address.
- Extra funding options for provision over the Christmas period were being looked at.

Christmas Presents for Vulnerable Children

The Community Engagement Team Leader advised that in addition to food provision, the Salvation Army was making provision for Christmas presents to be given to children in need over the period.

The Chair advised that the next meeting of the Southern Rural Committee was 10 December 2020.

The meeting closed at 8.28 pm

Chair