

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
**CABINET PANEL ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CO-OPERATIVE
DEVELOPMENT**

**MEETING HELD AS A VIRTUAL MEETING
ON MONDAY, 19TH JULY, 2021 AT 7.30 PM**

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Judi Billing (Joint Chair), Sam Collins (Joint Chair), Ruth Brown, Sarah Dingley, Jean Green, Michael Muir, Mandi Tandi, Juan Cowell and Ian Albert (In place of Kay Tart)*

In Attendance: *Steve Crowley (Service Director – Commercial), Sarah Kingsley (Communications Manager), Danny Pearson (Assistant Community Engagement Officer) and Anna Gouveia (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer)*

Also Present: *At the commencement of the meeting approximately 2 members of the public, including registered speakers.*

10 WELCOME AND REMOTE/PARTLY REMOTE MEETINGS PROTOCOL SUMMARY

Audio recording - 09 seconds

The Chair welcomed everyone to this virtual Cabinet Panel on Community Engagement and Co-operative Development meeting that was being conducted with Members, Officers and Members of the Public at various locations, communicating via audio/video and online, and advised that there was the opportunity for the public and press to listen and view proceedings.

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer undertook a roll call and referred Members to the Remote/Partly Remote Meetings Protocol Summary included with the agenda and the full version which was available on the Council's website which included information regarding:

- Live Streaming;
- Noise Interference;
- Rules of Debate; and
- Voting.

The Joint-Chair, Councillor Sam Collins, started the meeting proper.

11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 3 minutes 20 seconds

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Daniel Allen, Tony Hunter and Kay Tart.

Having given due notice Councillor Ian Albert advised that he would be substituting for Councillor Kay Tart and Councillor Michael Muir advised that he would be substituting for Councillor Tony Hunter.

12 MINUTES - 7 JUNE 2021

Audio recording – 3 minutes 51 seconds

Councillor Sam Collins proposed, Councillor Judi Billing seconded and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet Panel held on 7 June 2021 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

13 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 4 minutes 30 seconds

- (1) The Chair advised that the meeting was about Community Engagement with a focus on social media;
- (2) The Chair welcomed everyone participating at the meeting;
- (3) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be audio recorded as well as filmed. The audio recording would be available on the Council's website and the film recording via the NHDC YouTube channel;
- (4) 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.

14 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 5 minutes 11 seconds

There was no other business notified.

15 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording - 5 minutes 13 seconds

Mr Nick White, an administrator on the Royston Reporting Facebook page, which had approximately 15,000 users, gave a brief introduction to his organisation and use of social media.

Ms Catherine Bennett, Citizen's Advice North Hertfordshire, gave a brief introduction to her organisation and use of social media.

The Chair led a general discussion on community engagement and social media.

The following Members took part in the discussion:

- Councillor Sam Collins;
- Councillor Ruth Brown;
- Councillor Ian Albert;
- Councillor Sarah Dingley.

Points raised in the discussion included:

- How best to share North Herts information on social media pages in the region;
- Some Councillors already shared some content to pages in their region;
- Part of the Councillor's role should be to share content which would be of interest to their local community;
- Key messages, for example on early bin collections, could be shared to some groups;
- It was the responsibility of the page moderators to share NHDC content where relevant;
- The Community Engagement Team did post some content to local sites;
- It was not easy to share from the Engage North Herts Facebook site;
- Citizen's Advice North Herts now did webchats, telephone call backs and tried to respond to emails within 48 hours;
- Posts on the NHDC Facebook site could encourage people to share content.

The Communications Manager advised that:

- The Council did not have the resource to post news items to multiple groups around the district, due to the number of different groups. On emergency local issues, for example risk of flooding, the Council did try to share posts to the relevant local social media pages;
- It was felt that members of social media groups did not want the Council posting all messages to their groups; individuals or Councillors could post if they felt it was appropriate.

16 INFORMATION NOTE AND GROUP DISCUSSION

Audio recording – 23 minutes 12 seconds

The Service Director – Commercial introduced the Information Note and the Communications Manager drew attention to the following:

- A new NHDC website was being developed and the new site would be launched in sections from September – feedback from the public on the new site was encouraged;
- A 'Waste Warriors' public Facebook group had been launched by waste services covering waste reduction;
- NHDC was currently looking at a 'social listening tool' which could scan local pages and use AI to tell what the community was interested in;
- NHDC was looking at online engagement tools as part of a review of the engagement strategy, one being a 'town hall for the digital era'.

The following Members took part in the discussion:

- Councillor Judi Billing;
- Councillor Ian Albert;
- Councillor Sarah Dingley.

Comments included:

- The idea of participatory budgeting, particularly with young people, was welcomed;
- It would be useful to use the language of NHDC in any digital tools which were used, e.g. Town Talk instead of Town Hall;
- It was not possible for Councillors to monitor all the social media pages all of the time;
- Improved digital ways of seeking the views of younger people on the future of the district areas was encouraged;
- A demonstration of the online engagement tool could be given to a future meeting of the Cabinet Panel, if NHDC decided to go ahead with it;

- Those who did not use the internet would also need to be considered in any new engagement strategy.

The Communications Manager advised that:

- the online engagement tools could be customised, and Cornwall was using one if people wanted to see an example;
- data from the listening tool was anonymised so people could not be identified.

17 MEMBERS' DISCUSSION

Audio recording – 44 minutes 29 seconds

The Chair led a discussion amongst Members on community engagement and social media.

The following Members commented:

- Councillor Judi Billing;
- Councillor Ruth Brown.

Comments included:

- Councillors wanted to engage with as many people as possible, using traditional and modern methods, but there was no easy solution;
- The Communications Team could provide some social media training to Members which could cater to Members' different levels of knowledge;
- The Waste Warriors Facebook page was a really useful page for sharing ideas about sustainability and everyone was invited to engage, share and participate.

18 ACTIONS ARISING AND WORK PROGRAMME

Audio recording – 49 minutes 51 seconds

Councillor Sam Collins commented on the following:

- Suggestions for a theme for the next meeting were welcomed;
- Council meetings were no longer appearing on the calendar on the Council's website.

RESOLVED: That the Community Engagement Team Leader be requested to update the Work Programme with the following action points arising from the evening's discussion:

- (1) To consider the provision of training for Members on social media;
- (2) To review the use of the meetings calendar on the NHDC website;
- (3) To consider a clear theme and direction for the next meeting due to take place on 6 September 2021.

The meeting closed at 8.25 pm

Chair