

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

LETCHWORTH COMMITTEE

**MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES
ON WEDNESDAY, 13TH OCTOBER, 2021 AT 7.30 PM**

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Councillor Daniel Allen (Chair), Amy Allen, Simon Bloxham, Gary Grindal, Terry Hone, David Levett, Ian Mantle and Mike Rice*

In Attendance: *Simon Ellis (Development and Planning Control Manager), Claire Morgan (Community Engagement Team Leader), William Edwards (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager), Louis Franklin (MSU – IT Support)*

Also Present: *At the commencement of the meeting approximately 7 members of the public, including registered speakers.*

4 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 0:44

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Kate Aspinwall, Morgan Derbyshire, Adem Ruggiero-Cakir and Sean Prendergast.

5 MINUTES - 10 MARCH 2021, 16 JUNE 2021, 8 JULY 2021

Audio Recording – 1:02

Councillors Simon Bloxham and Amy Allen advised that as they were not present at the meeting in March they would abstain from voting.

Councillor Daniel Allen proposed, Councillor Terry Hone seconded and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meetings of the Committee held on 10 March, 16 June and 8 July 2021 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

6 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 2:17

There was no other business notified.

7 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 2:26

- (1) The Chair welcomed those present at the meeting, especially those who had attended to give a presentation;
- (2) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be audio recorded;

- (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.
- (4) The Chair advised that the Council was running a public consultation on the electoral cycle ahead of the Local Government Boundary Commission review and encouraged attendees to participate

8 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 4:50

Mrs Samantha Hough and Ms Kimberly Woodcock – Imajica Theatre Company CIC gave a presentation in support of their grant application, consisting of a song with backing music and signing, and a speech.

Points raised included:

- Imajica were requesting support for their Christmas pantomime;
- The pantomime would be in-person this year and supported by a digital companion;
- 60% of the seats were given to children with additional needs and families on low incomes which would be especially important this year as they were anticipating Christmas would be difficult for a lot of families.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor David Levett
- Councillor Simon Bloxham
- Councillor Terry Hone

In response to questions Mrs Samantha Hough and Ms Kimberly Woodcock advised:

- The digital pantomime released last year was released without charge, but used as an opportunity for people to donate as the company did not feel comfortable asking for money; it was also sent out for free to community groups and schools
- The company had received some funding from the district-wide COVID response programme last year;
- The company aimed to be self-sufficient eventually and was exploring other fundraising avenues including crowdfunding and support from local businesses, as well as ticket sales;
- They were still in touch with schools across the District and were hoping to go in to schools and present shows in smaller groups and classes in future.

The Chair thanked Mrs Samantha Hough and Ms Kimberly Woodcock for their presentation.

Agata Anna Kisacka and Ethel Merrel – Nova Wellness CIC gave a presentation in support of their grant application including:

- Nova Wellness CIC was a young organisation set up to provide holistic therapies to people who would benefit from support but could not afford them;
- They were seeking funding to help them expand their provision to support residents living in Letchworth;
- They provided support through local events with small groups of around 8 people that provided therapies as well as creating a forum for social interaction;
- Events have included therapists advising on lifestyle, diet and wellbeing, acupuncture, reiki, stress management etc;

- There was a real need for these kinds of therapies in the community in view of the stress and pressures of the last few months;
- The support of the Committee would enable Nova Wellness to expand its network and provide events for Letchworth residents.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Daniel Allen
- Councillor David Levett
- Councillor Gary Grindal

In response to questions Agata Anna Kisacka and Ethel Merrel advised:

- Residents were already travelling from Letchworth and other North Herts areas to Stevenage for their events;
- They would reach out to community organisations in Letchworth to build a network for referrals;
- They were based right next to the Lister Hospital and were renting premises above the gym connected to the rugby club;
- They had identified 3 groups in Letchworth and had made initial contact with them earlier in the year.

The Chair thanked Agata Anna Kisacka and Ethel Merrell for their presentation.

Ian Bentley – Hitchin and Letchworth Sea Cadets gave a presentation in support of their grant application including:

- They were requesting funding for IT equipment to help cadets through their learning process a lot which was now hosted online;
- The cadet branch had moved in to the centre of Letchworth and there were now 12 cadets signed up from Letchworth, and there was a waiting list for future members;
- The funding would go towards 10 laptops and a printer which was desperately needed.

The Chair thanked Ian Bentley for his presentation.

9 LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY BID MANAGER

Audio recording – 41:11

Ms Alice Johnson, Letchworth Garden City BID Manager, thanked the Chair for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding the issues and activities in Letchworth Garden City Town Centre including:

- The Christmas lights switch-on at the end of November;
- The Letchworth market;
- A Halloween trail during half term;
- Events were being organised to work in harmony with businesses currently in the town to help them through this difficult time on the high street;
- The BID was also working internally to change the way it supported traders in light of changes to the high street in general due to changing shopping habits.

Catherine Andrews, Town Centre Manager, advised that there was also a festive Christmas Market planned in December.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Mike Rice
- Councillor Gary Grindal

In response to questions Alice Johnson advised:

- They did not have BID budgetary figures to hand but were prepared to circulate them privately to Members on request;
- Both were new in post following a restructure of the BID;
- There has been positive feedback in terms of people returning to the high street;
- Footfall as a whole is down and the BID is actively working with ways to collaborate with business tenants to adjust to the new normal;
- The mood amongst the commercial community in Letchworth was positive and optimistic.

10 SECTION 106 AND UNILATERAL UNDERTAKINGS

Audio Recording – 47:11

The Development and Planning Control Manager presented the report entitled Section 106 and Unilateral Undertakings along with the Appendices 1 and 2 – Section 106 Updates.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Mike Rice

In response to questions the Development and Planning Control Manager advised that responsibility for road safety sat with the Hertfordshire County Council Highways authority and that funding for road safety measures was garnered through Section 278 agreements, with Section 106 moneys occasionally being put towards county-funding road safety projects and infrastructure; the District Council had some sustainable transport funding which was mainly used for active travel and pedestrian accessibility projects.

Councillor Ian Mantle proposed, Councillor Amy Allen seconded and it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the content of the report be noted;
- (2) That a report shall continue to be presented on an annual basis to the Area Committee, which sets 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.

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.

11 GRANT APPLICATIONS AND COMMUNITY UPDATE

Audio Recording – 27:27

The Community Engagement Team Leader presented the report entitled Grant Applications and Community Update as published in the supplementary agenda “GRANTS AND COMMUNITY UPDATE” along with the addendum to that supplement and highlighted the following:

- If the committee was minded to approve the grants requested at this meeting it would disburse £4450, leaving a £8410 remaining budget for the civic year;
- The Hitchin Committee had given £1000 of grant funding to the Hitchin and Letchworth Sea Cadets towards the same project, as it was a joint organisation that served members from both towns and Baldock;
- There was a Councillor Surgery upcoming;
- There would be a town talk via Zoom on the coming Wednesday.

RESOLVED: That the report of the Community Engagement Team Leader be noted.

a) GRANT APPLICATION: HITCHIN AND LETCHWORTH SEA CADETS

Audio Recording – 29:53

Councillor Mike Rice proposed, Councillor Ian Mantle seconded and it was:

RESOLVED: That grant funding of **£1000** be awarded to the Letchworth and Hitchin Sea Cadets for IT equipment to aid training for the cadets, camping and boating equipment, education, and training events.

b) GRANT APPLICATION: NOVA WELLNESS CIC

Audio Recording - 30:42

Councillor Amy Allen declared an interest in that she was Chair of the Willbury Community Forum and that while she had not yet had any contact with Nova Wellness CIC the organisation itself was listed in the application as an organisation that Nova Wellness CIC would seek to work with. As such she would take no further part in debate or vote.

The following Members took part in debate:

Councillor Terry Hone
Councillor David Levett
Councillor Gary Grindal

Points raised included:

- Members were concerned that Nova Wellness CIC was primarily based in Stevenage;
- More evidence of networking with Letchworth organisations would be necessary;
- It was a difficult situation for a new enterprise to be in being unable to provide a service without funding but unable to gain funding without providing a service;
- It would be possible to give grant funding as a phased payment with part of the money now and part later on receipt of information confirming successful referrals from and links to the Letchworth community.

Councillor Terry Hone proposed the officer's recommendations. Councillor David Levett seconded.

Councillor Gary Grindal proposed that grant funding be awarded as a phased payment totalling the recommended amount but disbursed in two portions, with the second released once evidence of that Nova Wellness CIC had formed links with Letchworth community groups was provided.

Councillors Terry Hone and David Levett accepted this amendment and on the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That grant funding of **£1950** be awarded to Nova Wellness CIC to cover the cost of wellness therapy events for Letchworth residents who are referred to them by partner voluntary North Herts organisations based in Letchworth, to be released in two phased payments of £975; the first to be released immediately (subject to call-in) and the second to be released when officers are satisfied with evidence that Nova Wellness CIC has established links with Letchworth community groups and that Letchworth residents have thereby benefited from their services.

c) GRANT APPLICATION: IMAJICA THEATRE COMPANY CIC

Audio Recording- 38:15

Councillor Daniel Allen declared an interest in that he performed as Father Christmas in Imajica Theatre Company events in the past, and would do so this December. As such he would take no part in the debate or vote on this application.

The following Members took part in debate:

- Councillor Terry Hone
- Councillor Gary Grindal

Councillor Terry Hone proposed, Councillor Gary Grindal seconded and it was:

RESOLVED: That grant funding of **£2,500** be awarded to Imajica Theatre Company CIC for a community pantomime programme taking place in December 2021 that will provide affordable and complementary access to the performing arts for a family friendly audience in the community.

12 WARD MATTERS AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS - MEMBERS' REPORTS

Audio recording – 58:34

Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation

Councillor Ian Mantle provided an update on Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation including:

- There would be no change to the number of governors or size of the trustee board, and District and County representatives would remain on the Board of Trustees;
- Proposals to require the majority of the trustee board to live in Letchworth were approved;
- There were proposals in the works to change the regulations concerning the skills required of a trustee;
- The Committee had to follow up on improving communication with the Heritage Foundation and take an active role in involving them with this committee.

The Chair requested that the Heritage Foundation be invited to attend future meetings of the Committee.

Wednesday, 13th October, 2021

The meeting closed at 8.33 pm

Chair