

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

LETCHWORTH COMMITTEE

**MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, GERNOH
ROAD, LETCHWORTH
ON WEDNESDAY, 9TH MARCH, 2022 AT 7.30 PM**

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Councillor Daniel Allen (Chair), Amy Allen, Simon Bloxham, Morgan Derbyshire, Terry Hone, Ian Mantle, Sean Prendergast and Mike Rice*

In Attendance: *William Edwards (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), Claire Morgan (Community Engagement Team Leader) and Becca Edwards (Apprentice Grant Administrator)*

Also Present: *At the commencement of the meeting approximately 11 members of the public, including registered speakers.*

23 WELCOME

Audio recording – 23 seconds

The Chair welcomed Members, Officers and public participants to the Committee meeting.

24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 1 minute 05 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Kate Aspinwall, Gary Grindal, David Levett and Adem Ruggiero-Cakir.

25 MINUTES - 8 DECEMBER 2021

Audio Recording – 1 minute 18 seconds

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 8 December 2021 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

26 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 1 minute 59 seconds

There was no other business notified.

27 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 2 minutes 06 seconds

- (1) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be audio recorded;

- (2) 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.

28 HERTFORDSHIRE CONSTABULARY

Audio recording – 2 minutes 30 seconds

Sergeant Lisa Perks, from Herts Police Safer Neighbourhood Team, gave a verbal update to Members on the work being done in the Letchworth area, including:

- Reports of all crime were down slightly from 1766 last year to 1763 this year (from 1 April 2021 to 6 March 2022).
- Reports of both residential and business burglary were down, from 51 to 44 and 45 to 26 respectively. This has been attributed to making the area more inhospitable for criminals and an increase in Business Watch members.
- Theft from vehicles had reduced from 77 to 52 and the police continued to educate people around unlocked vehicles.
- Personal robbery reports were down from 7 to 6, criminal damage was down from 219 to 182 and shoplifting was down from 219 to 182.
- Reports of violence against the person, which ranged from assault to malicious communications, were up to 826 compared to 631 last year.
- The three priorities identified for the Letchworth area, which are reviewed every 6 months, were; vehicle crime, speeding and open spaces/car parks.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Terry Hone

In response to questions, Sgt Perks advised:

- With the lighter evenings and better weather it was expected that more youths would be out in town and congregating than in the winter months and this can have an increasing effect on anti-social behaviour.
- At times anti-social behaviour from young people is high and the police are working with NHDC and schools to better deal with this problem.
- Lots of patrols were taking place to try and deal with this type of crime.

The Chair advised that the BID would normally comment on crime in the town centre, but they were not able to attend this meeting. He noted that the BID were currently doing some work around this.

The Chair thanked Sgt Perks for her update.

29 LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY BID MANAGER

Audio recording – 10 minutes 34 seconds

The Chair advised that the Letchworth Garden City BID Manager was unavailable to attend this meeting.

30 LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Audio recording – 10 minutes 44 seconds

Graham Fisher, CEO of the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation, gave a verbal update to Members, including:

- The Foundation had begun to see the beginnings of recovery from the Covid environment, which had a huge impact on income.
- Property rental income had been down 20%, but this was now returning to normal levels and 95% of invoiced income had been returned, which is helping to improve resilience of the Foundation.
- However, there were still significant historic debts outstanding, overwhelmingly this was commercial rent arrears. As the regulations change on 25 March 2022 this will create pressure and these outstanding debts are collected.
- The Governance review had been completed and changes have been implemented. This has seen the introduction of 4 appointed trustees, who have joined from various backgrounds, filling some of the gaps in experience on the board.
- Alongside Officers at NHDC, the consultation on Letchworth Cultural Strategy had begun. This was to look at a cultural strategy within the town centre and would rely on working collaboratively with partners across the town.
- For many other places, town centre regeneration plans are centred around culture and this is being invested in heavily as part of Letchworth's regeneration plans.
- There had been £150k invested in gallery and museum services in the town, but due to the impact of Covid further funds were required and fundraising was taking place to achieve this, with a further £150k being raised last year.
- A multi-agency Town Centre Strategy Group had been set up and was gathering input from businesses. A survey of businesses had been set up and it was hoped the group would meet in April 2022.
- Housing plans were still awaiting the Local Plan, but work was continuing on the LG3 area, around Kristiansand Way, and the vision for LG1 area was being explored, with work progressing well on both of these.
- One area ring-fenced throughout the pandemic was the annual £600k grant funding. However, last year the budget was underspent by a third, representing £200k, and £54k of this was allocated to organisations who did not have the capacity to take the funds.
- This represented the wider issues and challenges facing the demand and capacity within the charity sector.
- The grant funding was really important to the charitable status of the Foundation and they would start looking at how further collaboration with partners to ensure funds are going to appropriate places.
- There was a Street Party Grant Fund due to be announced shortly, which would offer up to £700 to host a street party event for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Daniel Allen

In response to questions Mr Fisher advised:

- There was a dual process with regards to funding. There was a Commissioning Group, where larger funding is given through partner organisations, such as Citizens Advice and Barnardo's.
- There is also an open access grant funds, which were themed, and applications were required for these funds.
- There would be a strategic review of the grant funding this year and this would explore whether money could be devolved to neighbourhoods, where there is little existing engagement, or through third party social action partners.

The Chair thanked Mr Fisher for his update.

Audio recording – 21 minutes 39 seconds

A verbal presentation was given by Nicky Young and Joy Holmes from Garden City Samba regarding their grant application, including:

- The grant funds requested were to produce training videos and some money had already been raised towards this.
- The idea started as, during the lockdown, videos were produced to allow people to learn their instruments and ensure skills were kept throughout the pandemic.
- New members have noted how helpful the videos have been and they have progressed at great speed.
- It was hoped that these new videos would cover more basic information, such as how to hold instruments, how to play and understanding conductors hand signals. These would offer support for members of the group, as well as any possible new members.
- A professional video and sound recorder was consulted, but the associated costs of these were too high for the group.
- The musical director of the group, Raz, is a professional musician and he is employed by the group. His style is all inclusive and he gives a lot of his own time to arrange gigs, access funds and promote the band.
- Raz can produce videos to a professional standard, at a fraction of the cost quoted by the professional video producer.
- The group varied in age, race and gender and aimed to be all inclusive, with discreet financial support available, if required.
- The original application was for £2285, but £1000 had been raised from elsewhere.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Daniel Allen

Councillor Terry Hone advised that he already supported this group in his position as County Councillor.

In response to questions Joy Holmes estimated that over 50% of members of the group were from Letchworth.

32 GRANT APPLICATION - GARDEN CITY SAMBA

Audio recording – 29 minutes 35 seconds

Councillor Ian Mantle proposed and Councillor Morgan Derbyshire seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That grant funding of £1,285 be awarded to Garden City Samba to provide on-line training resources for new members, as outlined in 8.1.1.

33 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 30 minutes 45 seconds

A verbal presentation, supported by a short video, was given by Bal Singh, Nav Djhaliwal and Gavin Hart from KHALSA Youth Football Academy regarding their grant application, including:

- The Academy was run by volunteers and aimed to develop young people's skills in football and coaching, as well as providing training in other areas such as photography/filming and social media skills.
- Over the last few years the work done at the Academy has been featured on national news reports (BBC, Sky, Asian TV networks) and several national newspapers have reported on the work recently.
- The Academy began as a way to tackle underrepresentation of Asians in football, but this has expanded to take on a community aspect which covers areas such as racism, anti-social behaviour, drug and knife crime and special needs support. They have also begun to deal with taboo topics within the Sikh community.
- The community work being done at the Academy had received several recognition awards, demonstrating success both on and off the pitch.
- The funds requested would go towards at Junior Football Leaders award, which helps young people to gain skills and transferrable knowledge to be used in later life.
- Looks to develop on community schemes and helps young people to understand how to put on events.
- The Academy had raised £5,500 so far and was requesting a further £2,000 from the Committee.
- The scheme was due to take place in May or June 2023, which would be the 35th anniversary of the Academy.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Mike Rice
- Councillor Ian Mantle

In response to questions Mr Singh advised:

- Futsal, literally translated, means 'football in a hall'. It uses a ball with 90% less bounce than a regular football, which allows players to manage the ball better and use both sides of the ball.
- There were around 85 attendees from Letchworth every week.

34 GRANT APPLICATION - KHALSA YOUTH FOOTBALL ACADEMY

Audio recording – 42 minutes 30 seconds

Councillor Mike Rice proposed and Councillor Sean Prendergast seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That grant funding of £2,000 be awarded to KHALSA Youth Football Academy towards a young leader's project aimed at 14 to 18-year-olds, as outlined in 8.1.2.

35 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 43 minutes 40 seconds

A verbal presentation was given by Tony Sinclair and Peter Bailey from Letchworth Garden City Bowls Club regarding their grant application, including:

- The Letchworth Garden City Bowls Club was long established having been at Norton Common since 1931.
- The club is small, but successful, with several local, district and national achievements, for both the men's and women's teams, over the last few years.
- Informal games between members take place, as well as competing in leagues and cups.

- Most of the attendees are from Letchworth, with some from the surrounding villages, and the majority of these are retired, as bowls does not require a need to be especially physically active.
- The grant funds would go towards replacing the ditch units which surround the green and form an important part of the game. While temporary fixes have been employed, a longer term fix is required to prevent further damage and minimise health and safety risks.
- The works would cost £1,194 and they requested £1,000 from the Committee.
- While the group is financially stable enough to support the day to day functions of the Club, financial support is required for ad hoc works such as this. The maintenance of the green costs £8k per annum and further money had to be spent on replacing kitchen items and repairing damage from vandalism.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Daniel Allen
- Councillor Ian Mantle
- Councillor Mike Rice
- Councillor Amy Allen

In response to questions, Mr Sinclair advised:

- This was to replace one section of the ditches, which was roughly 8ft. This damage had generally been caused by the ground work vehicles coming on and off the green.
- Some years ago the group took over maintenance costs of the green from the Council, but the Greenspace Team contribute £3,000 to assist with covering costs.
- There are devices in place to limit the damage done to the ditches by the ground work vehicles, but damage will still happen over time. It was hoped that the replacements would last another 70 years.

36 GRANT APPLICATION - LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY BOWLS CLUB

Audio recording – 50 minutes 30 seconds

Councillor Amy Allen proposed and Councillor Simon Bloxham seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That grant funding of £1,000 be awarded to Letchworth Garden City Bowls Club towards purchase of replacement ditch units, as outlined in 8.1.3.

37 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 51 minutes 24 seconds

A verbal presentation was given by Shelagh Mackey from Made with Clay CIC regarding their grant application, including:

- The group was committed to providing a positive space for all members of the community to engage with ceramics.
- There were 2 teachers at the club, supported by a further 4 volunteers, who covered jobs such as gardening, admissions and website management.
- There is specialist support offered to all attendees, whether new or existing ceramic enthusiasts.
- There is support available from the group for those with additional needs or low income and part of the ethos of the group is to make people feel that they belong in a community.

- The impact of Covid and subsequent shut down highlighted the importance of these groups.
- The group offered classes for well-being, skills development and apprentices.
- Referrals could be made to the group from outside organisations, such as Mind.
- The funds requested would be put towards new shelving for the group, which although may not sound like much, it is a vital piece of equipment for making ceramics and the current space is not enough.
- There is a desire not to raise prices for users, but want to be able to provide a service for as many people as possible.
- There were around 50 regular attendees and the vast majority of these were local to Letchworth.
- Many people have suffered over the last two years and it would be positive to be able to see them blossom knowing they have the support of a community.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Daniel Allen
- Councillor Sean Prendergast
- Councillor Ian Mantle

In response to questions, Ms Mackey advised:

- £500 had been raised so far towards the scheme, but no other grant schemes had been approached.
- Generally advertising was done through word of mouth, but people could also be referred onto the group. The group hold open days, with one planned for the 26 March, and work with other local groups to display work.
- They were based at the Vasanta Hall in Letchworth and had a long term tenure agreement at this site.

38 GRANT APPLICATION - MADE WITH CLAY CIC

Audio recording – 58 minutes 52 seconds

Councillor Sean Prendergast proposed and Councillor Mike Rice seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That grant funding of £2,169 be awarded to Made with Clay CIC towards the purchase of shelves, as outlined in 8.1.4.

39 GRANTS & COMMUNITY UPDATE

Audio recording – 59 minutes 49 seconds

The Community Engagement Team Leader presented the report entitled 'Grants and Community Update' and noted the following:

- It was interesting to hear that the Heritage Foundation have outstanding grant funds available. She would liaise with relevant parties at the Heritage Foundation to see what support the Council can offer.
- Following the grant funds allocated at this meeting, there was £956 to carry over for 2022/23.
- £2,000 had previously been allocated to the Wilbury and Icknield School Parents Association (WISPA) and it was still hoped that the project will progress once permission

has been granted from District and County Councils. It was proposed that this money be incorporated back into the base budget.

Councillor Terry Hone commented that many people do not realise that the Heritage Foundation has a grant scheme, as it is a very unique organisation.

Councillor Daniel Allen proposed that the money is rolled over to next year for use by WISPA.

The Community Engagement Team Leader advised that was possible and would not require a vote. A representative of WISPA could be invited to a future Committee meeting to update on progress of the project.

The Community Engagement Team Leader reminded Members that the next Councillors Surgery would be on 19 March, outside Costa Coffee in town.

Councillor Terry Hone proposed and Councillor Morgan Derbyshire seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee be recommended to endorse the actions taken by the Community Engagement team to promote greater community capacity and well-being for Letchworth.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

- (1) To ensure the Members are kept informed of the work of the Community Engagement Team.
- (2) This report is intended to inform Members of the financial resources available. It draws attention to the current budgetary situation by assisting in the effective financial management of budgets. 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.

40 WARD MATTERS AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS - MEMBERS' REPORTS

Audio recording – 66 minutes 33 seconds

Councillor Amy Allen provided an update on the Wilbury and Icknield School Parents Association (WISPA), who had previously been allocated grant funds from the Committee and notified the Committee that planning permission for the scheme had been submitted on 9 March 2022.

Councillor Daniel Allen highlighted that the next Wilbury Community Café would be on the 12 March 2022 and invited all to attend.

The meeting closed at 8.37 pm

Chair