

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET PANEL ON COMMUNITY

MEETING HELD AS A VIRTUAL MEETING
ON MONDAY, 31ST JANUARY, 2022 AT 7.30 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Sam Collins (Co-Chair), Judi Billing (Co-Chair), Sarah Dingley, Jean Green, Mandi Tandi, Michael Muir and Keith Hoskins*

In Attendance: *James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), Steve Crowley (Service Director - Commercial), Chloe Gray (Commercial Manager), Ashley Hawkins (Community Engagement Officer) and Danny Pearson (Assistant Community Engagement Officer)*

Also Present: *At the commencement of the meeting approximately 8 members of the public, including registered speakers.*

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ian Albert and Tony Hunter.

Councillor Daniel Allen was absent.

Having given due notice, Councillor Michael Muir substituted for Councillor Tony Hunter.

2 MINUTES - 30 SEPTEMBER 2021, 8 NOVEMBER 2021

Councillor Sam Collins, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Sarah Dingley seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meetings of the Committee held on 30 September 2021 and 8 November 2021 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

3 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. The Chair welcomed those present at the meeting, especially those who had attended to give a presentation and join in the discussion. The focus of the meeting would be on Community Events Throughout 2022, with a specific focus on events arranged for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.
2. 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 NHDC website and the film recording via 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

4 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business notified.

5 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Chair welcomed Tom Hardy, Hitchin BID Manager, to give a verbal presentation on planned events in Hitchin for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, which included:

- Plans were underway for the Platinum Jubilee events in Hitchin, with an initial meeting held in December and a further planning meeting held at the end of January 2022.
- Events were planned to span the four days of the weekend. There would be a big screen in the market place showing the Trooping of the Colour and the film The Queen on Thursday, which would be followed by a big band and patriotic songs in the evening and the lighting of a beacon on top of Osinsky's.
- The Lord Lieutenant of Hertfordshire was expected to attend to light the beacon, as well as a representative of the Bowes-Lyon family.
- On Friday, Tilehouse Rotary would be running a carnival parade from the football club through the Town Centre, with food stalls and music in the marketplace as this is happening. On Saturday, kids craft activities would be taking place in town.
- Sunday would see the Big Lunch take place, with support of Wetherspoons who had provided picnic benches, and local businesses will be encouraged to offer outdoor service.
- The programme of events in Hitchin was largely intended to mirror events happening in London.
- Having looked at the souvenir programme from the 1977 Silver Jubilee celebrations, they would look at what events could be repeated and where possible include the same businesses who are still operating in the town. There was a possibility that a souvenir programme could be made to support these Platinum Jubilee celebrations.

The Chair welcomed Jim McNally from Baldock Big Lunch Committee to give a verbal presentation on the preparations going into this year's event, which included:

- Baldock had run a Big Lunch event for around 5 years and this year the date of the event had been changed to align with the Jubilee weekend.
- The Baldock Festival would start at the end of April with the Baldock Beer Festival and run through to the Street Fair on 14 May 2022, with over 100 events planned during this time, and a Jubilee theme throughout.
- There would then be a two week hiatus to finalise plans for the Big Lunch over the Jubilee weekend.
- The Big Lunch would attempt, as in previous years, to use local suppliers from the town to provide food at this event.
- The High Street would be closed off for the Big Lunch. There would be a fun fair with 1950s/60s themed rides, attendees would be encouraged to dress up accordingly with a best dressed competition and appropriate music would be played by local musicians.
- Organisers were aware that streets across the town would be having their own smaller events, but this was seen as a complementary event to these, with around 300 attendees expected.
- The Jubilee allowed the event to take on a slightly different slant this year from previously.
- The organising team would set up the marquees and gazebos and would adorn these with red, white and blue decorations.

6 INFORMATION NOTE AND GROUP DISCUSSION

The Chair invited the Commercial Manager to present the Information Note. The Commercial Manager advised that the Community Engagement Officer, Ash Hawkins, would be providing an overview of planning requirements for events. The Community Engagement Officer advised:

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- Councillors Jim McNally and Sarah Dingley had established the Baldock Events Forum and Royston Events Partnership respectively to support events in the town with sharing licences.
- The Community Engagement Officer was keen to develop these local partnerships to make running events more streamlined.
- There were pages and documents on the NHDC website for planning community events but the process can still be daunting to those who have no previous experience.
- The Community Engagement Team were happy to assist where possible and would offer support and signposting to make the process as pain free as possible.

In response to points raised by the Community Engagement Officer, the Hitchin BID Manager and Letchworth BID Manger advised that they do allow community groups to run events using BID licences and went further to offer support with paperwork and road closures.

The Assistant Community Engagement Officer echoed comments made and noted that as well as practical support, the team has a large reach to amplify events across the district, as demonstrated with the Tractor Lights event in December.

Councillor Val Bryant advised that she had received an email, as Chair of the Council, from the Lord Lieutenants office offering their attendance at any Jubilee events in the district. The Chair confirmed that a representative was already due for attendance at the Hitchin events.

The Chair invited those present to discuss obstacles faced in putting on events, where the Council could better support community groups with this or any other comments relating to putting on community events.

The following Members and members of the public took part in the discussion:

- Cath Boughton – Royston First Manager
- Cathy Andrews – Letchworth BID Manager
- Jim McNally – Baldock Big Lunch Committee
- James Willis – Hitchin Arts Group
- Ashley Hawkins – Community Engagement Officer
- Councillor Judi Billing
- Councillor Michael Muir
- Councillor Sarah Dingley
- Tom Hardy – Hitchin BID Manager
- Emma Rowe – St Mary's School PTA

Points raised included:

- Plans for events in Royston were in the early stages, but it was hoped an event could be hosted in Priory Memorial Gardens and a shop window decoration competition would be held.
- It was useful to hear from others putting on events what their ideas were and what issues they may have faced.
- There would be events held in Letchworth, but these had been delayed following a recent reshuffle of BID officer staff. While nothing was yet confirmed, it was hoped family events could be held across the weekend, with local businesses involved.
- The Eden Project website had support packages and framework documents available for anyone looking to put on a "Big Lunch" style event.
- Support available on the NHDC website had not been looked at by those present when arranging events and it was suggested that these pages could be more useful if they offered ideas for events and links to relevant pages (e.g. licensing).
- A timeframe would be useful, so organisers know when certain aspects of arranging events need to be completed, for example when to apply for licences, road closures, etc.

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- NHDC advice had generally come through verbal support from the Community Engagement Team rather than from NHDC website.
- Baldock was the only town in the district without a BID and therefore did not have a Town Centre Manager to assist with events. The events in Baldock were all run by volunteers and often requests to the Baldock Events Forum forget this, so NHDC help would be appreciated.
- Long term it would be beneficial to fund a Town Centre Manager for Baldock, as volunteers will leave at some stage.
- Previous attempts to establish a BID in Baldock had failed due to the lack of industry in Baldock, often proposals fell on deaf ears and it did not progress further.
- The Safety Advisory Group at NHDC had a calendar of events across the district and perhaps the public information on this could be shared on the website.
- A weekly list of events was circulated to Members and it was requested that it be explored whether this could be distributed more widely and publicly.
- Cross promotion of events from organisations and BIDs would be useful and would serve residents well, but this could also be supported through NHDC social media and other communication channels.
- This cross promotion might encourage village residents in the district to attend events in towns which were not necessarily their usual or nearest.
- Promotion for events in Baldock and Royston was generally based around social media, although some paper leaflets were made for local distribution (including surrounding villages). This was often reflected in the attendees at the events in these towns, who were generally local.
- Hitchin Creative Group could run a series of smaller scale events in the run up to the main events planned across the Jubilee weekend to help with promotion.
- Hitchin BID events were generally repurposed from other towns and they were keen to share their experiences and knowledge with other towns in the district, as they had already done with the Jubilee event planning.
- The Hitchin BID Manager was Chair of the Vibrant Towns group, which included all town centre managers in Herts, and this offered an honest look at past event experiences, including sharing of contractors, prices/contract and details of hire, as well as other information.
- Cost had often been prohibitive to putting on events at some of the others towns and the suggested pooling of knowledge and experiences from Hitchin BID was welcomed.
- Baldock Big Lunch worked on a ticketed basis, as this was required to ensure the local businesses ordered supplies specifically for the event and to minimise waste.
- The Community Engagement Officer had good contacts regarding First Aid and Portaloos for events and was happy to share these where required.
- The website addtoevent.co.uk was suggested as a useful starting point, as you can search what is required and suppliers will make contact with you directly.
- Given the possibility of rain and the impact this will have on attendances, it was strongly advised to get in touch with the Council to make plans for food waste and recycling.
- It was noted that other events in the district, and across the country, would have a knock on effect on supplies of certain items and so it was advised to book early. It was highlighted that there was a Liam Gallagher concert at Knebworth House which would further impact on portable toilet supplies.
- Due to the event at Knebworth House, there would be limited number of police around to support the Hitchin events, specifically with road closures where they would usually assist.
- It was expected that by April there would be a shortage of union bunting, so was important to sort this early.
- The Community Engagement Officer was collating information around “cul-de-sac events” and encouraged people to let him know about where these were happening.
- Previous quotes for waste management services at Baldock Community Fireworks were extremely high and it would be prohibitive for smaller organisations. Luckily this event was held at a school and so bins on site could be used for waste.

- It was highlighted that for events there was a 25 page Safety Advisory Board document required and it was felt that this was not always properly read by those responsible at the Council. This was identified as a possible hinderance to event organisers who see it as too many hurdles.

The Chair thanked those for taking part in the discussion and noted that Portfolio Holders and Officers responsible were in attendance and would likely act accordingly on the feedback heard.

7 MEMBERS' DISCUSSION

The Chair invited Members to comment on the discussions they had heard regarding community events in 2022 and beyond.

Councillor Judi Billing commented that it was important to hear some of the criticism of the Council's support with events and that this was important evidence to take away and present to other shareholders at the Council to improve the support available. It was not always possible for Council departments to think of community engagement when they have a service or function to run.

8 ACTIONS ARISING AND WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair invited the Service Director – Commercial to provide an update on the Work Programme and highlight actions identified from discussions.

The Service Director – Commercial advised that the previous actions included on the Work Programme related to other topics, so could not be addressed at this meeting. He had identified some further actions to be included and these would be circulated following the meeting. If Members or Officers had any further suggestions for actions they could notify him.

The Commercial Manager commented that while this meeting had focussed on Jubilee events, it would be beneficial to have further discussions on the theme of wider community events at future Cabinet Panel meetings.

Councillor Sam Collins agreed and further commented that these meetings offer a useful space for organisations, individuals and Members from across the district to discuss experiences of events. This could form a regular update at the meeting with promotion of upcoming events.

Councillor Sam Collins noted that the North Herts Museum had a great programme of events to be unveiled for the 2022 period and encouraged people to keep an eye out for these announcements.

RESOLVED: That the Service Director – Commercial be requested to update the Work Programme with the following action points arising from the meetings discussions:

- To provide information on the NHDC website which includes ideas and examples of what we are doing to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, including a reminder of key Community Engagement contacts and promotion of smaller events.
- Set out timeframes on the NHDC website for undertaking an event application, to help applicants understand the time it will take.
- Explore whether the Council can provide, on its website, a comprehensive calendar of events happening across the district.
- Request that the Council uses its social media platforms to promote events happening across the district.
- To explore the possibility of the Council providing practical support for events (for example waste management).

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- Include a wider discussion on community events in 2022 at a future meeting of the Cabinet Panel on Community Engagement.

The meeting closed at 8.39 pm

Chair