

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
CABINET PANEL ON COMMUNITY AND ENTERPRISE

**MEETING HELD IN THE REMOTE MEETING
ON MONDAY, 20TH FEBRUARY, 2023 AT 7.30 PM**

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Keith Hoskins (Co-Chair), Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg (Co-Chair), Ian Albert, Claire Strong and Mandi Tandi*

In Attendance: *James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager), Claire Morgan (Community Engagement Team Leader) and Steve Crowley (Service Director - Enterprise)*

Also Present: *At the commencement of the meeting approximately 6 members of the public, including registered speakers.*

Councillor Alistair Willoughby was also in attendance.

27 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ralph Muncer and Simon Bloxham.

Councillors Chris Lucas and Tom Plater were absent.

28 MINUTES - 9 JANUARY 2023

Councillor Keith Hoskins, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Mandi Tandi seconded and, by consensus, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 9 January 2023 be approved as true record of proceedings.

29 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(1) 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.

(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.

(3) The Chair advised participants they would need to use their 'Raise Hand' function on Zoom to request to speak.

30 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business notified.

31 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Chair confirmed that the expected public presenters and participants were in attendance.

32 CREATING A WOMEN'S SAFETY CHARTER

The Chair invited Caroline Thwaites to provide the Panel with a presentation on the Southwark Council's Women's Safety Charter. Ms Thwaites thanked the Chair for the opportunity and provided a verbal presentation, which included that:

- She was the Community Safety portfolio head at Southwark Council and had been involved in this work for 25 years, including the development and introduction of the Women's Charter in 2014.
- Southwark was a London borough with a population of around 300k and an average age of 34, making it comparatively young.
- The police area was one of the busiest in London in terms of number of crimes and severity of these.
- The discussion around women's safety had changed since the launch of the Charter in 2014, with a number of tragic high-profile deaths, and the safety of women had been adopted as a Council priority over the last few years.
- In 2014 there was a focus on a 'Fairer Future' priority, which had been a consultative approach alongside Hollaback, and spoke primarily to females, as at the time there was a clear picture of harassment in licensed venues and premises.
- It was reported at the time that the behaviour had been normalised and that the harassment was generally left unreported.
- Having spoken to the premises, they requested the Council to support them in helping develop tools to not just deal with harassment, but also any potential escalation to violence.
- There was a key pledge developed, which sought to bring in some key principles that all venues would follow, these were: visibility of the campaign, clarity in venue acting effectively, taking reporting seriously, training for front of house staff and active support for victims.
- 130 venues signed up by the launch and this was targeted at known areas in Southwark where the issue was the most extreme and encouraging venues to do this as part of their licence application.
- There was a conversation about whether this could be required as a licensing condition, but it was advised that this was not possible as the change would be required to come from central government.
- There had been progress made on the safety of women across London boroughs and there was now a focus on evaluating how the scheme was still performing and whether it could be refreshed in line with other, national initiatives.
- This evaluation work would not look to encompass a wider group to consult with on its contents.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Keith Hoskins
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg
- Councillor Ian Albert
- Councillor Mandi Tandi

In response to questions, Ms Thwaite advised that:

- When the Charter was first introduced around 15-20% of businesses in the area signed up. This had decreased due to the pandemic, as well as the emergence of other national campaigns, but it was hoped the work could be refreshed and improved.
- It was not just about residents, but also those from outside the borough visiting.
- It was important to have a clear and consistent message as part of the campaign and ensure that support offered is not confusing.
- Engagement of all parties was imperative.

- Lighting was a key issue raised following the death of Sarah Everard, but it was felt that this needed to be looked at alongside other considerations about safety in the night-time economy. It was important that lighting was not focussed on as this may falsely reassure people.
- Lighting audits were being carried out across Southwark, but this was alongside other policy considerations.
- The Women's Safety Charter was developed in 2014, however the conversation had now changed, and it was important to understand safety for all, with the Charter as a part of this wider policy.
- Southwark had run a misogyny campaign, which had been developed alongside young men, so that they could explore the how men could get involved, but also the specific vulnerabilities facing men.

N.B. Councillor Ian Albert left the meeting at 20.05 and did not return.

The Chair invited Bob Mardon and Cassie Harman to provide the Panel with a presentation on their experience of running a music venue, Club85 in Hitchin. They thanked the Chair for the opportunity and provided a verbal presentation, which included that:

- It was important to have a visible presence so that those in danger know who to contact. They currently employ the Ask Angela scheme, but have never had to use it within the venue.
- The different type of event would determine the level of issues with which staff may have to contend, and this was communicated with staff in the venue.
- Most attendees of the venue know that they are attending a safe space, where bad behaviour will not be tolerated by venue staff.
- Staff are provided with training to assess and deal with any situations which present themselves.
- They venue was about to move towards gender-neutral, inclusive toilets.

In response to a question from Councillor Alistair Willoughby it was noted that the venue tried to treat people like humans and to be as involved as possible in the experience of customers. It was felt that a charter which standardised practice across the district would be very good.

The Chair thanked the Club 85 representatives and noted that the Charter would potentially act as best practice to be copied at premises across the district.

The Chair invited Kerrie Portman to provide the Panel with a verbal presentation, which focused on her experience as a woman suffering abuse in North Herts. At the conclusion the Chair thanks Ms Portman for sharing the highly sensitive and personal experience, which was echoed by others in attendance as well as offers of support.

33 LGBTQ+ HISTORY MONTH

A presentation was received from Keith Fitzpatrick-Matthews, the Operations and Facilities Manager at North Herts Museum, on LGBTQ+ History Month at the Museum, who advised that:

- The museum had always supported Pride History Month and that a flag would be flown outside the building throughout the duration of the month.
- They had tried to collate more material to support the display, with more details from around the district.
- The display this year had been heavy on trans issues, as these were felt to be at the forefront of LGBTQ+ discussions today.

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- The display had been modelled on sex, sexuality and gender – sex being the parts one has, sexuality being how you choose to use these and gender about how one might hide these.
- Sex is not binary and noted that in 60% of skeletons it is not possible to determine whether they were male or female.
- There had been an example of anti-trans hate leaflets distributed throughout the museum this year and this had been reported to the police as a hate crime.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg commented that the Pride History Month display at the museum was always fantastic and commended Keith and his staff. She noted that there would usually be a flag flown at the Council Offices, but this had been replaced by the Ukraine flag this year owing to the ongoing conflict. She highlighted that all women deserve a safe space, and that all women included trans women, who have the right to exist anywhere. She hoped that North Herts Pride had been a beacon against hate in North Herts.

Bob Mardon from Club 85 noted that their venue did not have specific plans to celebrate Pride Month, as it was felt the staff at the venue did enough to promote the rights of LGBTQ+ community without a flag being raised.

34 GROUP DISCUSSION

There was no further discussion at this point of the meeting from Members, Officers or members of the public.

35 FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

The Chair led a discussion on possible future agenda item topics, which included exploring the Women's Safety Charter alongside representatives from the wider community, including from an enterprise angle. It was also suggested that Churchgate and the wider North Herts economy be discussed at a future meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.37 pm

Chair