

**NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**SOUTHERN RURAL COMMITTEE**

**MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, GERON ROAD, LETCHWORTH  
ON TUESDAY, 20TH DECEMBER, 2022 AT 7.30 PM**

**MINUTES**

**Present:** *Councillors: Councillor George Davies (Chair), Councillor Mandi Tandi (Vice-Chair), Ian Moody, Ralph Muncer and Claire Strong*

**In Attendance:**

*Claire Morgan (Community Engagement Team Leader) Louis Mutter (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer) and Aimee Flack (Assistant Community Engagement Officer)*

**Also Present:**

*At the commencement of the meeting approximately 1 member of the public, including registered speakers.*

**112 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

*Audio recording – 1 minute 14 seconds*

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Barnard, Faye Forst, Sam North, Lisa Nash and Terry Tyler.

**113 MINUTES - 29 SEPTEMBER 2022**

*Audio Recording – 1 minute 30 seconds*

Councillor George Davies proposed and Councillor Ian Moody seconded and following a vote it was:

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 29 September 2022 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

**114 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS**

*Audio recording – 2 minutes 13 seconds*

There was no other business notified.

**115 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

*Audio recording – 2 minutes 20 seconds*

- (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) Members were reminded the make declarations of interest before an item, a detailed reminder about this and speaking rights are set out under Chair's Announcements on the agenda.
- (5) North Herts recently acquired the lease for the Churchgate Shopping Centre in Hitchin. Ahead of drawing up proposals for the site, North Herts Council is inviting the community to take part in an initial consultation to get their views on what they would like to see in the Centre.

The consultation will be available online and there will be a promotion on social media channels and on flyers around the district. The consultation will open on 5 December 2022 and will run until 5 February 2023.

- (6) The Chair bid farewell to Louis Mutter, Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer who was clerking his final meeting before moving to Hertfordshire County Council.

## **116 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

*Audio recording – 3 minutes 20 seconds*

There was no public participation at this meeting.

## **117 CITIZENS ADVICE - RURAL ENGAGEMENT OFFICER INTRODUCTION**

The Chair invited Ms. Christine Adams to address the Committee.

Ms. Christine Adams of the North Herts Citizen Advice Bureau thanked the Chair for the opportunity to speak and introduced herself as the new Rural Engagement Officer. Ms. Adams then updated the committee on the work of the North Herts Citizens Advice Bureau and raised the following key points:

- Ms. Adams has been asked to promote the work of the Citizens Advice Bureau to the rural residents of North Hertfordshire;
- Have a presence in Letchworth Town Centre; unfortunately the Hitchin office recently closed;
- The operation of the Citizens Advice Bureau has changed since the pandemic, operating on more of an appointment basis rather than a drop-in basis;
- CAB would like to see more rural residents getting in contact;
- Ms. Adams wanted members of the Committee to be aware that CAB are here to help; they are happy to attend rural events and want to get involved in the village communities;
- CAB is recruiting local volunteers; a lady from Offley has very kindly offered to work 4 hours a week to provide support.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Mandi Tandi

In response to questions Ms. Christine Adams advised:

- Ms. Adams was due to be in Kimpton for a meeting this evening but attending the Area Committee clashed; happy to attend further Kimpton pop-up events;

- Councillors can provide support to residents by signposting them in the direction of the Citizens Advice Bureau.

The Chair thanked Ms. Christine Adams for attending and addressing the Committee.

## 118 GRANTS AND COMMUNITY UPDATE

*Audio Recording – 10 minutes 50 seconds*

The Assistant Community Engagement Officer presented the report entitled Grants & Community Update and highlighted the following key points:

- The 2022/23 base budget was £8,700 with a £222 carry forward from the previous year; £3,306 has already been awarded to grants which leaves a budget of £5,616;
- No grants to consider at this meeting, the deadline for the next meeting is the 6<sup>th</sup> January;
- The Outlook Magazine provides an update from 2 of the previous successful grant applicants from this Committee;
- The Community Engagement Team have been collecting information on 'Warm Hubs' being set up in the district – more information will be provided on the North Herts website;
- The Council's Walking & Cycling Infrastructure Plan consultation has now ended and the Transport Team are working with Hertfordshire County Council to utilise the results;
- The Youth Democracy Event was well received by the schools, with 3 school visits in the Southern Rural area;
- The Community Engagement Team are currently organising a Holocaust Memorial Day which will take place in the Council Chamber on 27 January at 10:30am;
- North Herts Heroes just started taking nominations, deadline is 8 January.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Claire Strong

In response to questions the Assistant Community Engagement Officer and the Community Engagement Team Leader advised:

- The Community Engagement Team have the ability to make delegated decisions if grant applications for future events miss the deadline; especially with the deadline so close after Christmas. It would be advised that organisations express their interest in grants as early as possible and can work out the finer details closer to the time.

## 119 WARD MATTERS AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS - MEMBERS' REPORTS

*Audio recording – 20 minutes 50 seconds*

Councillor Ralph Muncer made the Committee aware of a public consultation based on the possibility of lowering the speed limit in Kimpton. This is available to respond to on the Hertfordshire County Council website.

Councillor Claire Strong informed the Committee that the Holwell Cricket pavilion was close to opening and that Pirton are extremely happy they have received £50,000 to help fund their new recreation ground.

## 120 PARISH FORUM NETWORK

*Audio Recording 23 minutes 35 seconds*

The Assistant Community Engagement Officer presented an overview of the planned Parish Forum Network and highlighted the following points:

- The Community Engagement Team have various network groups around various themes such as Art & Culture, Food Provision;
- Allows groups to build relationships and share best practices;
- Idea is that Parish Councils can meet and discuss issues they are facing, discuss particular themes;
- First meeting back in December, 4 Parishes attended; the theme was the cost of living;
- Wanted to have a discussion with the committee to get some ideas.

The following Members and officers took part in a discussion:

- Councillor George Davies
- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Claire Strong
- Community Engagement Team Leader
- Councillor Ian Moody
- Assistant Community Engagement Officer

The key points raised in the discussion were:

- The Parish Network should not overlap with the work of the Area Committees, should be peer-to-peer, such as sharing best practices on Neighbourhood Plans;
- The Network should not be limited to the Parish Councils in the Southern Rural area, could also incorporate the Parishes in the Baldock & District and Royston & District areas;
- The theme for the December meeting was set beforehand, it linked well with Citizens Advice;
- Parish Council's were invited to attend and join the discussion during this meeting but due to it being close to Christmas there was only 1 Parish which expressed interest in attending;
- Police & Crime discussion topics would be popular with Parishes;
- Parish Chairs & Clerks were contacted about when they would most like to attend the December meeting and most said a weekday morning;
- Possibly moving the Southern Rural Area Committee to Village Halls across the area;
- Forum planned to be meeting twice a year;
- Borrowing heavily from the Rural Conference in order to best organise the Network Forum.

The Assistant Community Engagement Officer thanked the Committee for the suggestions and stated that she would also hear from absent Committee Members for their opinions before testing the feasibility of the Parish Forum Network.

The meeting closed at 8.22 pm

Chair