

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

SOUTHERN RURAL COMMITTEE

MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, GERONON ROAD, LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY, SG6 3JF
ON THURSDAY, 2ND MARCH, 2023 AT 7.30 PM

MINUTES

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

In Attendance:

Aimee Flack (Assistant Community Engagement Officer), James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager), Sjanet Wickenden (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer) and Eleanor Hopcraft (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer)

Also Present:

At the commencement of the meeting approximately 5 members of the public, including registered speakers.

121 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 1 minute 12 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor David Barnard.

Councillors Lisa Nash, Sam North and Terry Tyler were absent.

122 MINUTES - 20 DECEMBER 2022

Audio Recording – 1 minute 33 seconds

Councillor George Davies, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Claire Strong seconded and following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 20 December 2022 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

123 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 2 minutes 26 seconds

There was no other business notified.

124 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 2 minutes 30 seconds

(1) The Chair reminded Members to make declarations of interest before an item, the detailed reminder about this and speaking rights is set out under Chair's Announcements on the agenda.

- (2) The Chair advised that for the purposes of clarification that 4.8.23(a) of the Constitution did not apply to this meeting.

125 HERTFORDSHIRE CONSTABULARY - UPDATE

Audio recording – 3 minutes 3 seconds

PS Guy Westwood from Hertfordshire Constabulary gave a verbal update and advised:

- Priorities in the Southern Rural area were speeding, fly tipping and anti-social behaviour including unlawful drug usage in open spaces.
- Crime numbers for this year ran from 1 April 2022 to 27 February 2023, in line with the dates provided in the update last year.
- Hitchin Rural had seen all reported crimes decrease to 747 compared to 786 last year, North Hertfordshire had seen an increase to 5,959 from 5,550 previously and County overall had seen an increase to 69,552 from 67,702 last year.
- Hitchwood, Offa and Hoo, Chesfield and Knebworth had seen a decrease in reported crimes. Kimpton and Codicote had seen an increase in reported crimes this year.
- Hitchin Rural had seen an increase in residential burglaries to 35 from 32, North Hertfordshire had seen an increase to 183 from 176 and County overall had seen an increase to 2,282 from 2,248 last year.
- Hitchwood, Offa and Hoo and Chesfield had seen a reduction in residential burglaries, while Kimpton, Knebworth and Codicote had seen an increase.
- Some of the residential burglaries had been domestically related.
- Rural areas had seen an increase in burglaries involving businesses and communities, with 19 cases from 10, North Hertfordshire had seen an increase to 138 cases from 94 and County had seen an increase to 1,139 from 992.
- The Police were working closely with bordering forces as these crimes are likely caused by out of county criminals.
- Hitchin Rural had seen a decrease in thefts from motor vehicles, with 31 incidents compared to 33 last year. North Hertfordshire had seen an increase to 271 from 235 and County had seen an increase to 3,768 from 3,438.
- Hitchwood, Offa and Hoo, Chesfield and Knebworth had seen a decrease. Kimpton and Codicote had seen an increase.
- Catalytic converters were the most common parts stolen and were normally shipped abroad.
- Personal robbery levels had stayed the same in Hitchin Rural with 4 cases. North Hertfordshire had seen a decrease with 26 incidents compared to 30 and County overall had seen an increase to 548 incidents from 489.
- Violence against Persons had decreased across Rural, North Hertfordshire and County overall. Kimpton had seen a slight increase
- Criminal Damage had increased in Hitchin Rural to 83 incidents from 77 previously. North Hertfordshire incidents had increased to 736 from 620 and County had seen an increase to 6,632 from 6,623. Knebworth was the only ward to have seen a decrease in criminal damage.
- Shoplifting had seen an increase across Hitchin Rural, North Hertfordshire and County-wide. Chesfield was the only ward to have seen an increase in shoplifting. Most of the reports had come from Budgen's in Great Ashby.
- Hate crime incidents had reduced across the Community safety partnership to 97 from 109.
- Drug offences had reduced to 22 from 24. Chesfield and Codicote had seen an increase, Kimpton had remained the same with reductions in Hitchwood, Offa and Hoo and Knebworth.

- Anti-social behaviour reports had decreased to 281 from 309. Graveley, Wymondley and Hitchwood, Offa and Hoo had seen an increase.
- Neighbourhood Watch continued to grow with 5388 members overall. The area with the lowest coverage was Oughton, with Codicote at nearly 60% coverage.
- There were four instances of fly tipping, which was not a true reflection.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Faye Frost
- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Mandi Tandi
- Councillor George Davies

In response to the questions, PS Westwood and Inspector Lant advised:

- There would be an increased police presence in Kimpton. Weekend meetings could be an option for engagement.
- The crime metrics for Kimpton were low, however the percentage made reports seem high.
- The Council dealt with fly tipping reports and prosecution, however the police offered assistance and interview rooms to the Officer when needed.
- It was young people that tended to use nitrous oxide. The Police were working with North Hertfordshire College on an education campaign on its usage.
- Nitrous oxide usage was not covered in the Misuse of Drugs Act. Anti-social behaviour arising from its use was for the Police to deal with. Littering of canisters was not the responsibility of the Police
- The location of canisters would be helpful for intelligence. The public could use Crimestoppers to report this.
- There were issues surrounding domestic violence-related burglaries, and would be dealt with through the domestic violence unit.
- Deterrents such as locks, lights and CCTV could reduce incidents of residential burglary. The OWL network kept public informed of reports nearby
- It was hoped a Barn Meet would be held this year to engage with Farmers.

The Chair thanked PS Westwood and Inspector Lant for their presentation.

126 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 42 minutes 38 seconds

The Chair invited Aimee Flack, Community Engagement Officer, to provide an update on budgets. Ms. Flack thanked the Chair, gave a verbal update and advised:

- The 2022/23 base budget was £8,700 with £222 carried forward from 2021/22.
- The grants awarded to date totalled £3,306, which left £5,616 available.
- The grant applications for the meeting totalled £3,985, which if approved by Members, would leave £1,631 to be carried forward into 2023/24.

The Chair invited Kirsty Badman and Tighearnán Power, from Breachwood Green JMI School, to present. The grant applicants thanked the Chair, gave a verbal presentation and advised:

- Breachwood JMI School had 83 pupils.
- The school did not have a grass area due to its small size, and used the village recreation ground for PE lessons.
- Using the recreation ground was not ideal, as it is used by the public as well as the school.
- Pupils felt unsafe playing on the school's concrete playground.
- The allocation of a grant would be a boost for the school, as they were aiming to raise £24,085 altogether to go towards an artificial grass area and fencing.
- The school had secured funding from local businesses, Christmas performances and raffle tickets.
- The £2,485 asked for in the application would go towards spectator fencing.

Councillor Ralph Muncer thanked the applicants, and highlighted that play was important for children's cognitive development. He commented that the County Council, Parish Council and Sports England may be able to help with funding.

Councillor Claire Strong commented that this was a long-term project, and was happy to propose the full amount.

Councillor Faye Frost thanked the applicants, and commented that it was hard to raise money for schools and to ask parents for more money. She was pleased that the money would be going into grassroots and the project had her support.

Councillor Ian Moody thanked the applicants and asked what size the football pitch would be.

Ms. Badham advised that the football pitch would fit within land spare at the school, with 45m of fencing surrounding it. She advised that Think Sport used the school's facilities during the school breaks to run holiday camps, so this project would benefit the wider community too.

Councillor Moody asked the applicant what was the remaining project balance.

Ms. Badham advised that the project was short of £150.

Councillor Claire Strong proposed and Councillor Ralph Muncer seconded and following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: £2,635 to Breachwood Green JMI School PTFA towards a new spectator rail which will enclose the sports pitch as outlined in 8.1.1- 8.1.4.

The Chair invited Steve Christopher from Kimpton Folk Events to present. Mr. Christopher thanked the Chair, gave a verbal presentation and advised:

- Kimpton Folk events had been a registered charity since 2015.
- The festival was run by volunteers with 5 trustees.
- The key objective was to advance, improve, develop and maintain public education and appreciation of folk music.
- The folk festival was the main event to reach this objective, however other live music events were put on throughout the year.
- The festival was in its sixth year, after two years out due to COVID.
- The festival was split into two parts: self-financing ticketed folk events and free community events.
- There were a range of concessions such as food and craft stalls.
- There was a variety of music, which various activities such as craft workshops, open mic and busker stops.
- The budget was £7,500, with performers being the largest costs.

- The grant application would go towards the free part of the festival.
- Since COVID, it had not been easy to secure funding.

The Chair advised that this grant application was contingent on the receipt of an adequate safeguarding policy, which would need to be reviewed.

Councillor Ralph Muncer commented that Kimpton had fantastic community events, which encouraged people to visit Kimpton. COVID was still having a massive impact on events, and advised the applicant to look at other grant funding such as a Locality Grant.

Then following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Faye Frost
- Councillor Claire Strong

In response to the questions, the applicant advised:

- The festival aimed to keep its reserves at 50% of the festival costs.
- The ticketed part of the event does not make a profit. The ticketed sales would break even and were expected to total £9,500.
- The festival had made other funding applications to different bodies this year.
- No reserves would be put into the running of the festival this year, funding would come from grants.
- The total costs of the event, including the free parts of the event would be over £17,000.

It was proposed Councillor Ralph Muncer and seconded by Councillor George Davies to offer £1,500 from the report's recommendation and following the vote, it was tied.

Councillor George Davies, as Chair, had the casting vote and voted against the recommendation. Therefore, the vote was lost.

Following a discussion, Councillor Ralph Muncer proposed that £750 be awarded to the applicant. Councillor George Davies seconded, and following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee allocated £750 to Kimpton Folk Events to provide free entertainment at Kimpton Folk Festival on 1st July 2023 subject to the receipt of an adequate safeguarding policy.

127 GRANT APPLICATIONS AND COMMUNITY UPDATE

Audio recording – 102 minutes 47 seconds

The Chair invited Aimee Flack, Community Engagement Officer, to present. Ms. Flack thanked the Chair, gave a verbal update and advised:

- The main updates were highlighted in the report.
- The Community Engagement team were attending parish meetings to introduce the team and the introduction of a Parish Forum.
- The North Hertfordshire Centre for Voluntary Service and Letchworth Heritage Foundation were being supported by a Community Conference titled 'All about us'. The conference led on from a survey published last that aimed to find out what challenges community groups were facing.

- Spiralling overheads, growing service demands, reduced income and increased pressures on funders were concerns for all survey respondents.
- The conference would discuss survey themes and learn what support should be in place to support groups. Local funders would also be in attendance to share grant information.
- The conference would take place on 23 March 2023 from 9:30-15:30.
- Members were encouraged to invite groups from their wards to attend.

Following questions from Councillor Ralph Muncer, Ms. Flack advised:

- There was no update on the Area Committee survey for Members.
- The Parish Councils were not invited by community engagement to the Meeting, however an email would be sent out about the recording.

Councillor George Davies proposed and Councillor Faye Frost seconded, and following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee endorsed the actions taken by the Community Engagement team to promote greater community capacity and well-being for Southern Rural.

128 WARD MATTERS AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS - MEMBERS' REPORTS

Audio recording – 106 minutes 18 seconds

The Chair advised that the Community Orchard in Wymondley held a Wassail this year as this was the first opening year post-COVID and the first year the orchard would bear fruit.

Councillor Ralph Muncer highlighted concern over reports that Luton Airport had submitted a development application to increase the passenger capacity to 32million passengers per annum. There was a public enquiry ongoing on the report, and advised that himself and colleagues would try to prevent the expansion.

Councillor Ian Moody thanked the Community Engagement Officer for attending Codicote Parish Council last month, and highlighted the positive feedback that had been received. He advised that building work was progressing well in Codicote.

Members thanked the Chair for his work in the civic year.

The Chair advised that this was the last Southern Rural meeting of the civic year, and his last meeting altogether. He thanked Officers for their help in facilitating meetings and Members for working in the best interests of the Area's constituents.

The meeting closed at 9.20 pm

Chair