

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
BALDOCK AND DISTRICT COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD AS A VIRTUAL MEETING
ON MONDAY, 7TH DECEMBER, 2020 AT 7.30 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Michael Weeks (Chair), Jim McNally (Vice-Chair), Steve Jarvis, Michael Muir, Val Shanley and Tom Tyson*

In Attendance: *Ashley Hawkins (Community Engagement Officer), Matthew Hepburn (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer) and William Edwards (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer)*

21 WELCOME AND REMOTE/PARTLY REMOTE MEETINGS PROTOCOL SUMMARY

The Chair welcomed everyone to this virtual Baldock and District Committee meeting that was being conducted with Members and Officers at various locations, communicating via audio/video and online. There was also the opportunity for the public and press to listen to and view proceedings.

The Chair invited the Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer to explain how proceedings would work and to confirm that Members and Officers were in attendance.

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer undertook a roll call to ensure that all Members and Officers could hear and be heard and gave advice regarding the following:

The meeting was being streamed live onto You Tube and recorded via Zoom.

Extracts from the Remote/Partly Remote Meetings Protocol was included with the agenda and the full version was available on the Council's website which included information regarding:

- Live Streaming;
- Noise Interference;
- Rules of Debate and
- Voting.

Members were requested to ensure that they were familiar with the Protocol.

The Chair, Councillor Michael Weeks, started the meeting proper.

22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

23 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business notified.

24 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (1) The Chair welcomed those present at the meeting;
- (2) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be audio recorded;
- (3) Members were reminded to make declarations of interest before an item, the longer reminder about this and speaking rights was set out under Chair's Announcements on the agenda.

25 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

26 GRANTS AND COMMUNITY UPDATE

The Community Engagement Officer presented the report entitled Grants and Community Update, including:

- The Community Engagement Officer provided Members with a breakdown of funding available to the Committee as detailed at Paragraph 7.3 on page 8 within the report;
- At next meeting of the Baldock and District Committee scheduled for March 2021, there were two groups expected to attend to ask for a Grant – those groups were Baldock Scouts and a Conservation Group in Ashwell;
- The Community Engagement Officer asked Members to contact him if they knew of any groups that needed a grant;
- The Baldock Beast Half Marathon was the only event to be held during 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic;
- The Christmas Fair did not take place owing to the pandemic. However, the Christmas lights switch-on took place on 5 December 2020 as a virtual event.

Councillor Jim McNally reported at this stage that the Baldock Events Forum were holding a virtual Christmas Fayre in lieu of a physical Christmas Fayre. Small, local businesses were due to advertise on the Baldock Events Forum website and people were able to shop online, helping to support local businesses.

Councillor Jim McNally further added to the Community Engagement Officer's update on the Baldock Beast Half Marathon by advising that the event would be ran differently in 2021 owing to the pandemic. However, despite that, they were hoping for a reasonable number of runners.

After Councillor Jim McNally's update, the Community Engagement Officer continued with his report as follows:

- He was continuing to liaise and support staff at Baldock Arts and Heritage Centre with the phase 2 works at the building;
- During November he promoted on behalf of North Herts CVS, free hand sanitiser for local community groups;
- He had been assisting the Baldock Community Centre with their application to the Covid-19 Support Fund to assist with the costs for insuring and taxing the new minibus. He informed Members that if the Baldock Community Centre were unable to secure funding support from the Covid19 Support Fund, the minibus would not be able to operate.

The Community Engagement Officer enquired with County Councillors Muir and Jarvis as to whether they were able to help with the cost of insuring and taxing the new minibus by using their Members Locality Budget.

Councillor Muir advised that he would need to know the amount that was required and then he could check his locality budget balance.

The Community Engagement Officer responded that he would check the exact amount and provide it to Councillors Muir and Jarvis after the meeting.

The Community Engagement Officer continued with the report as follows:

- He informed Members that the Chair's Awards were open for nominations until 18 December 2020;
- The Holocaust Memorial Day was taking place on 27 January 2020 at 11:00am.

After the Community Engagement Officer's report, Councillor Weeks and McNally provided an update on the market, as follows:

- The market had grown substantially;
- There were a dozen of stalls per week;
- The stall rents were cheaper than other markets; and
- Some small businesses had started to trade at the market.

RESOLVED: That the actions taken by the Community Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being for the Baldock be endorsed.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

- (1) To ensure the Committee is kept informed of the work of the Community Engagement Officer;
- (2) This report is intended to inform Members of the financial resources available to the Committee. It draws attention to the current budgetary situation by assisting in the effective financial management of the Area Committee's budget. 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.

27 WARD MATTERS AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS - MEMBERS' REPORTS

The Chair and Members of the Committee raised various topics under Ward Matters.

Councillor Michael Muir provided the following updates:

- Baldock Rotary Club were running Santa's Sleigh. There would be 2 marshals ensuring that people did not get too close to the sleigh. In normal circumstances, the club would have raised approximately £6,500. However, as a result of the pandemic, donations had been lower. So far, around £1,000 had been raised. A resident in Baldock donated £750.00. People were able to donate via the Rotary Club's Just Giving Page;
- There was lots of positive feedback regarding the Christmas lights;

- There were a number of places in Baldock that had benefited from Councillor Muir's Highways Locality Budget. He had spent his £90,000 Highways budget on footpaths, carriageway resurfacing, bird protection, Temporary Road Traffic Orders, speed surveys, drainage investigations and a Speed Indicator Device on North Road.

Councillor Jim McNally provided the following updates:

- Donations to the Baldock Events Forum could be made via their Facebook page;
- Councillor McNally had received a report from a Constituent that a vehicle was parked on zig-zag lines linked to a pedestrian crossing. He reminded Members and Residents not to park on a Zig-Zag lines on the road.

Councillor Steve Jarvis provided the following updates:

- There were a number of locations in the rural areas that had had roads resurfaced;
- There had been an increase in flooding mainly during the Summer owing to some ongoing drainage issues – those were being investigated.

Councillor Tom Tyson provided the following updates:

- There had been some flooding in Ashwell;
- He commended the Parish Councils particularly Ashwell and Bygrave for their work during the Covid pandemic;
- There had been a problem of overcrowding in Ashwell as many people sought outdoor activities during the lockdown period and certain sites attracted too many people; and
- There was an increase in litter at Ashwell Springs and fly-tipping remained a concern for the rural areas.

Councillor Val Shanley provided the following update:

- He had been assisting elderly people in the Community to get their groceries and collect prescriptions during the pandemic.

Town Talk:

Councillor Tom Tyson raised that Town Talk should be renamed so that it better incorporates the villages surrounding Baldock i.e. 'Baldock Town and Village Talk'

In response, Councillor Michael Weeks agreed with Councillor Tyson that the name should be changed to reflect this. He advised that as a Committee they would have a think of what Town Talk should be called.

Councillor Michael Muir reported that he had distributed approximately 70 Town Talk flyers to shops. However, as many of them were closed during the pandemic restrictions, he had to post them through the letterboxes.

The meeting closed at 8.06 pm

Chair