

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

LETCHWORTH COMMITTEE

MEETING HELD AS A VIRTUAL MEETING ON WEDNESDAY, 9TH DECEMBER, 2020 AT 7.30 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Helen Oliver (Vice-Chair), Daniel Allen, Kate Aspinwall, Morgan Derbyshire, Terry Hone, David Levett, Ian Mantle, Sean Prendergast, Mike Rice and Adem Ruggiero-Cakir*

In Attendance: *Lea Ellis (Assistant Community Engagement Officer), Matthew Hepburn (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer) and Anna Gouveia (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer)*

Also Present: *At the commencement of the meeting approximately 5 members of the public, including registered speakers.*

29 WELCOME AND REMOTE/PARTLY REMOTE MEETINGS PROTOCOL SUMMARY

Audio recording – 9 seconds

The Vice-Chair welcomed everyone to this Letchworth 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 Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer undertook a roll call and drew attention to the Remote/Partly Remote Meetings Protocol Summary which gave advice regarding the following:

- Attendance;
- Live Streaming;
- Noise interference;
- Rules of Debate;
- Voting; and
- Part 2 Items.

The Vice-Chair, Councillor Helen Oliver, started the meeting proper.

30 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 2 minutes 55 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Gary Grindal and Sue Ngwala.

31 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 3 minutes 6 seconds

There was no other business notified.

32 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 3 minutes 10 seconds

- (1) The Vice-Chair welcomed those present at the meeting, especially those who had attended to give a presentation;
- (2) The Vice-Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be audio recorded as well as filmed. The audio recordings would be available to view on Mod.gov and the film recording via the NHDC YouTube channel.
- (3) The Vice-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.

33 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - GREENCARE AT NORTON

Audio recording – 4 minutes 43 seconds

Mr Ray Wilson, Managing Director of Greencare at Norton, thanked the Vice-Chair for the opportunity to address the Committee in support of the grant application as follows:

- Mr Wilson thanked Members for their help and support with the Greencare project at Norton;
- One of the plots had been made accessible for people with mobility issues;
- Disruption had been caused by the pandemic;
- They were currently working with 10 adults with various needs;
- Grant funding was being requested for a toilet facility on site;
- There were plans for a social enterprise.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor David Levett;
- Councillor Daniel Allen.

Members congratulated Mr Wilson on the project. It was suggested that the Letchworth Civic Trust could be approached for revenue funding if required. The Letchworth masonic lodges were also suggested as potential sponsors.

Mr Wilson advised that:

- The toilet would be a temporary solution which was required immediately, and a more permanent solution would be looked into in the future;
- Additional funding streams and income generation were both being explored.

The Vice-Chair thanked Mr Ray Wilson for his application.

34 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - LETCHWORTH RINK HOCKEY CLUB

Audio recording – 14 minutes 14 seconds

NB Councillor Kate Aspinwall joined the meeting at 7.50pm.

Ms Aude Mongiatti, Letchworth Rink Hockey Club, thanked the Vice-Chair for the opportunity to address the Committee in support of the grant application as follows:

- The club had suffered financially due to the Covid-19 pandemic and had lost all its fundraising opportunities during the 2020 season;
- The club invested resources into its junior players who had been successful in the leagues and selected for the national team;
- Financial support was requested to enable the National Head Coach to train new coaches for junior players and for a monthly training session from the National Head Coach for the junior players;
- The club was very grateful to the Committee for a previous grant which had helped nine junior players with their fees and monthly subscription;
- The club had hoped to fundraise approximately £300 to meet the cost of this project and some other funding streams were being explored.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Helen Oliver;
- Councillor Terry Hone;
- Councillor Daniel Allen;
- Councillor Mike Rice.

Members' comments included:

- Hertfordshire County Council had a locality budget which was there to support charitable events and opportunities, and Councillor Terry Hone was the person to contact in that regard.

Ms Aude Mongiatti advised that:

- The previous grant received from the Committee had enabled the club to support some junior players who might not otherwise have been able to participate due to the investment involved in buying kit, funding subscriptions, insurance and other expenses;
- Further information could be provided to the Committee on the possibility of funding from sponsors;
- Between 15 and 20 of the junior members who would benefit from this funding were from Letchworth (which represented approximately half of the juniors).

The Assistant Community Engagement Officer confirmed that previous funding support of £2,500 awarded in the previous financial year had been paid to the club.

The Vice-Chair thanked Ms Aude Mongiatti for her application.

35 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - REVEREND TREVOR SHARP

Audio recording – 41 minutes 10 seconds

The Reverend Trevor Sharp, Vicar of St George and St Nicholas Norton, thanked the Vice-Chair for the opportunity to address the Committee and provided Members with a verbal presentation in respect of the church's activities during lockdown including:

- Churches had shared many of the difficulties experienced by small businesses and all people brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic;
- Restrictions in place had been very upsetting regarding funerals, and weddings had been also been cancelled due to restrictions on numbers attending;
- The church had set up a 'Love Thy Neighbour' scheme where volunteers from the church, Letchworth Rugby Club and wider community had done shopping for vulnerable people, collected prescriptions and even helped with dog walking;

- Volunteers had telephoned people who were feeling isolated to combat loneliness in the community which had been highlighted during the pandemic;
- Services had been live-streamed during lockdown and some services had been able to start taking place in church again which was really valuable to give some the opportunity to go out;
- A programme of family Christmas services was being held within the guidelines;
- The pandemic had brought the community closer together but also highlighted the difficulties of loneliness experienced in the community.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Daniel Allen;
- Councillor David Levett.

The Revered Trevor Sharp advised that:

- St Michael's Church, Broadway was sadly shutting down as the building was unsafe and the church could not afford to fund repairs;
- The existing three parishes of St George's, St Paul's and St Thomas' would serve Letchworth in the future;
- Live-streamed services had been well-attended and had opened up a new medium for people to attend without travelling to the church including the elderly.

The Vice-Chair thanked Reverend Trevor Sharp for his presentation.

36 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - NORTH HERTS AFRICAN CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY

Audio recording – 51 minutes 59 seconds

Ms Kava Johnson, North Herts African Caribbean Community thanked the Vice-Chair for the opportunity to address the Committee and provided Members with a verbal presentation in respect of her organisation and its activities including:

- Committee funding had been received to carry out some activities during Black History Month;
- Some activities had been able to be done online, e.g. the plaits and braids and poetry workshops which had been well-attended;
- Activities had been extended beyond Black History Month to provide ongoing activities throughout the year;
- Doing activities online had enabled the group to extend their reach and they were working in partnership with other community groups across North Hertfordshire to deliver sports and social activities;
- The group was looking for other income streams and putting together funding applications to do more to serve the community.

The Vice-Chair thanked Ms Johnson for her presentation.

37 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - GARDEN HOUSE HOSPICE

Audio recording - 1 hour 44 seconds

Ms Claire Lunnon, Garden House Hospice, thanked the Vice-Chair for the opportunity to address the Committee and provided the Members with a presentation in respect of the grant funded recent Lights of Life event including:

- The usual annual Remembrance Service could not be held due to the Covid restrictions so a pre-recorded Service of Remembrance was held on 22nd November in the gardens which had been lit up following the funding that had been received;
- The service was put online and received over 3,500 views;
- A slide show of pictures of the event was shown to the Committee;
- Each evening between 23rd – 29th November, twenty-minute slots were available for people to visit the garden, look at the stars that had been sent in or write a star and hang it up, and light a candle;
- Over 800 stars had been written and about 300 people had visited;
- People surveyed had felt that it had been a suitable tribute which exceeded their expectations and they would like to see it again next year;
- Over £51,000 had been raised which was the most that had ever been raised with this kind of service.

The Vice-Chair congratulated Ms Claire Lunnon for putting on such a great event and thanked her for her presentation.

38 LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Audio recording 55 minutes 44 seconds

The Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation had been unable to join the Committee due to technical difficulties so the Assistant Community Engagement Officer read out an update on their behalf including:

- The re-opening of the cinema, gallery and museum were being supported with cultural recovery funding;
- The farm was planned to be re-opened in February 2021;
- The Culture and Heritage Strategy was being developed;
- The Foundation was working with the BID to support 'Shop Local';
- There were continuing challenges on property income particularly with leisure and office sectors and commercial rent arrears were rising;
- A new strategy was being developed to support local social action mitigating the effects of increasing poverty and unemployment whilst nurturing local enterprise;
- The Foundation was working in partnership with Citizens Advice, using asset-based community development to support the Money Advice programme;
- They were working on local service maps to support other projects they were funding;
- Grants awarded included £6000 to Howard Garden Day and Social Care Centre; £3000 to Norton Methodist Community Hall; £4,500 to Create Network; £1,800 to Letchworth Garden City Samba; £610 to Talking News; £187 for books to Fearnhill School; £1,480 to the Letchworth Centre for Healthy Living and £13,900 to Tilehouse Counselling;
- They continued to keep in touch with the food provision groups and had awarded a grant of £14,280 to Letchworth Foodbank;
- They were likely to have a £35,000 grant underspend at the end of the year.

In response to a Member's question, the Assistant Community Engagement Officer undertook to ask the Letchworth Heritage Foundation if they had a strategy for spending the underspend.

The Vice-Chair thanked the Assistant Community Engagement Officer for presenting the update on behalf of the Letchworth Heritage Foundation.

39 LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY BID MANAGER

Audio recording – 1 hour 6 minutes 7 seconds

The Vice-Chair informed the Committee that the BID Manager had been unable to attend the Committee that evening. She advised that it was an incredibly busy time for the BID who had been doing a lot to support local businesses.

If Members had any questions, the Assistant Community Engagement Officer could direct them to the BID Manager, or alternatively the Vice-Chair advised that she sat on the BID Board so any questions could be directed to her after the meeting.

40 GRANT APPLICATIONS AND COMMUNITY UPDATE

Audio recording – 1 hour 6 minutes 47 seconds

The Assistant Community Engagement Officer presented the report entitled Grants and Community Update, together with the following appendix:

- Appendix 1 – 2020/21 Financial Year Budget Sheet

She advised that:

- Photographs of Greencare at Norton had been included in the report to show Members what the funding previously granted had been spent on;
- Imajica Theatre Company had finished filming their Seasonal Pantomime and tickets could now be booked for the online show;
- The Community Engagement Team were considering further ways of promoting the Zoom town surgeries to more residents.

The following Members asked questions and took part in discussion:

- Councillor David Levett;
- Councillor Kate Aspinwall.

Members raised the following topics:

- The lighting in Howard Park and Gardens had not been working for several months despite being reported many times. This made it dangerous and difficult to walk through the area at night and late afternoon. An update on this matter was requested before the Committee's next meeting;
- The Committee passed on its thanks to the Assistant Community Engagement Officer and her team for all their support during the Covid-19 pandemic.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the actions taken by the Community Engagement Team to promote greater community capacity and well-being for Letchworth be endorsed;
- (2) That the Assistant Community Engagement Officer be requested to seek an update on the functioning of the lighting in Howard Park and Gardens before the next meeting of the Committee.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure the Committee is kept informed of the work of the Community Engagement Team.

41 GRANT APPLICATION - GREENCARE AT NORTON

Audio recording – 28 minutes 9 seconds

The Vice-Chair led a debate on the award of grant funding as per the application submitted by Greencare at Norton.

The Assistant Community Engagement Officer advised that a further application would be likely from Greencare in a few month's time for a compost toilet and the Committee could decide to provide funding for that at this meeting, which would still leave a good amount in the budget for the March meeting.

The following Members took part in debate:

- Councillor David Levett.

Members comments included:

- It was suggested that it would be a little premature to award additional funding at this stage as Greencare were still looking into longer-term options for a more permanent toilet facility.

It was proposed by Councillor David Levett, seconded by Councillor Daniel Allen and:

RESOLVED: That grant funding of £400 be awarded to Greencare at Norton for a small shed and portaloo to address exclusion issues.

REASON FOR DECISION: To improve services provided by local organisations and groups which are accessed by the community.

42 GRANT APPLICATION - LETCHWORTH RINK HOCKEY CLUB

Audio recording – 29 minutes 23 seconds

The Vice-Chair led a debate on the award of grant funding as per the application submitted by Letchworth Rink Hockey Club.

The Assistant Community Engagement Officer advised that the club had gone above and beyond what had been asked of them last time by the Committee as they had funded twice the amount of young players who might not have otherwise been able to afford to participate, which had resulted in the need for further funding for this training.

The following Members took part in debate:

- Councillor Daniel Allen;
- Councillor David Levett;
- Councillor Mike Rice.

Members' debate included:

- There was concern about funding the full amount requested in light of the recent award of £2,500 granted to the Letchworth Rink Hockey Club by the Committee and the fact that there were many organisations in need of funding at the present time due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the fact that it was such a niche sport, and that only approximately half of the beneficiaries would be from Letchworth;

- More information would be useful on the sponsors' contributions and the monies coming in and going out of the club which could be considered by the Committee at the next possible opportunity;
- It was suggested that the club could approach organisations or bodies for funding in the regional areas where other club participants were from;
- It was noted that sponsors did not always provide money but often subsidised kit and equipment in return for advertising.

It was proposed by Councillor Helen Oliver, seconded by Councillor Kate Aspinwall and:

RESOLVED: That the decision to grant funding of £1,350 to Letchworth Rink Hockey Club for training for junior teams and new coaches be deferred.

The reason for deferral being that Members requested that further information regarding sponsorship, membership catchment area, and details of any other bodies which had been approached for funding be presented to the Committee at the next available opportunity.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure all appropriate funding avenues had been explored.

43 WARD MATTERS AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS - MEMBERS' REPORTS

Audio recording – 1 hour 11 minutes 54 seconds

The Vice-Chair led a discussion regarding Ward Matters and Outside Organisations.

The following issues were discussed:

Refuse Collections

Councillor Daniel Allen advised that:

- There had been a lot of comments received about the lack of bin emptying in the Wilbury area;
- Everyone was encouraged to report any overflowing bins immediately.

Letchworth Men in Sheds Group

Councillor Daniel Allen advised that:

- The Letchworth Men in Sheds Group was looking for a new site and had enquired about the old Bowls Club at the back of the Three Horseshoes public house in Norton.
- Members were requested to contact Councillor Allen with any information.

Holocaust Memorial Day – Virtual Event

The Assistant Community Engagement Officer advised that:

- Holocaust Memorial Day would be happening virtually on 27th January 2021;
- This would include a poster competition for primary school aged children, a creative writing competition for young people aged 11-18, and a full line-up of other events happening to mark the day.

Chair's Volunteer Awards

The Assistant Community Engagement Officer advised that:

- Nominations were now open for the Chair's Volunteer Awards and the deadline was 18th December 2020;
- Nominations for four different awards could be made via the website;
- Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation was also holding volunteer awards.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Members be reminded to report any missed refuse collections in their ward;
- (2) That Members be requested to contact Councillor Daniel Allen if they knew who to contact regarding the Bowls Club at the back of the Three Horseshoes public house as a potential site for the Letchworth Men in Sheds Group;
- (3) That Members be requested to share details of the Holocaust Memorial Day – Virtual Event.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure that the Letchworth Committee is kept apprised of matters affecting Wards and Outside Organisations.

The meeting closed at 8.46 pm

Chair