

**NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**SOUTHERN RURAL COMMITTEE**

**MEETING HELD AS A VIRTUAL MEETING  
ON THURSDAY, 10TH DECEMBER, 2020 AT 7.30 PM**

**MINUTES**

**Present:** *Councillors: Councillor Claire Strong (Chair) David Barnard, John Bishop, George Davies, Lisa Nash and Terry Tyler*

**In Attendance:** *Claire Strong (Community Engagement Team Leader), Matthew Hepburn (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), William Edwards (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer)*

**Also Present:** *At the commencement of the meeting approximately 3 members of the public, including registered speakers.*

**22 WELCOME AND REMOTE/PARTLY REMOTE MEETINGS PROTOCOL SUMMARY**

*Audio Recording – 0 minutes 15 seconds.*

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

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer undertook a roll call and gave advice regarding the following:

- Attendance;
- Live Streaming;
- Noise interference;
- Rules of Debate;
- Voting.

The Chair, Councillor Claire Strong, started the meeting proper.

**23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

*Audio recording – 2 minutes 21 seconds.*

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Faye Frost, Steve Deakin-Davies and Ian Moody.

Councillor Sam North was absent.

**24 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS**

*Audio recording – 2 minutes 40 seconds.*

There was no other business notified.

**25 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

*Audio recording – 2 minutes 45 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.

**26 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - FC COMETS**

*Audio recording – 3 minutes and 50 seconds.*

Christopher White, FC Comets, thanked the Chair for the opportunity to address the Committee in support of their grant application as follows:

- The FC Comets were a football club founded in 2002 with over 200 children and young people between the ages of 8 to 18;
- They were not a selective team and did not operate a trial period in order to be as accessible as possible;
- There was a long waiting list of children in the under 7 and under 8 categories waiting to play;
- Changes brought on by COVID restrictions had meant they have an abundance of volunteers willing to help run the club and greater participation;
- New equipment was needed to start the Under 7s and Under 8s teams in the spring season;
- Organised sport outside of the school environment was especially useful in current restricted conditions;
- Organised sports at a young age prepared children with the skills to improve their physical and mental wellbeing as they grow up;
- The total cost of the goals was £960 and the club were requesting £800 from the Committee which would allow them to purchase the new equipment immediately in preparation for the spring.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor David Barnard

In response to questions Christopher White advised:

- The FC Comets had approached both the Herts FA and the Sports Foundation for advice and fundraising;
- Funding from the Sports Foundation was only available to replace equipment that was unsafe; FC Comets were looking to fund the purchase of entirely new equipment.

The Chair thanked Christopher White for his presentation.

**27 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - KNEBORTH FC**

*Audio Recording – 12 minutes and 36 seconds.*

Stuart Biddle, Knebworth FC, thanked the Chair for the opportunity to address the Committee in support of their grant application as follows:

- Knebworth FC was a club with 30 teams and around 350 members across a wide range of age groups from as young as 3;
- Knebworth FC also believed in making football accessible and featured 4 girls' teams as well as a number of mixed gender teams;
- Social distancing measures meant their built changing rooms had to be closed;
- They were seeking funding for the purchase of temporary gazebos for shelter during cold and wet weather conditions in the coming season;
- They were seeking £200 from the Council to fund the total purchase cost of £400;
- They had received some funding from the Football Foundation and would make up the difference from club reserves.

The Chair thanked Stuart Biddle for his presentation.

**28 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - OFFLEY PRIMARY SCHOOL**

*Audio Recording – 14 minutes 34 seconds.*

Paul 'Ted' Edwards, Head Teacher of Offley Endowed Primary School, thanked the Chair for the opportunity to address the Committee in support of their grant application as follows:

- Offley Primary was a rural school ranked Good by Ofsted at the heart of its local community;
- The village of Offley was growing and there were more young families in the area who wanted their children to attend the school;
- To support working parents and provide childcare for this growing number of children a breakfast & afterschool club called Jesters was founded, with wages paid from the school budget and other costs covered by parent contributions;
- Funding for activities and equipment was the main shortfall;
- There was a list of other improvements to the provision that could be funded in future after equipment for activities was acquired, including outdoor lighting and a sports coach;
- The school budget was stretched at present and taken up entirely by providing education during school hours;
- Many families had chosen to send their children to Offley Primary because of its afterschool provision and the support it provided them in returning to work;
- The PTA which would usually support projects like this was lacking in funds due to the cancellation of its usual fundraising activities as a result of the pandemic;
- The application was for £1250 and the club would gratefully receive any funds offered.

The Community Engagement Team Leader advised that funding could only be awarded in line with the application submitted and that Members should consider the allocation of funds for the provision of activities equipment only.

The following Members asked questions and took part in the discussion:

- Councillor John Bishop
- Councillor David Barnard

The Chair thanked Paul Edwards for his presentation.

## 29 GRANT APPLICATION - FC COMETS

*Audio Recording – 26 minutes 58 seconds.*

The grant application was for £800. In view of the current difficulties and the funds available to the Committee, the Chair proposed and Councillor Lisa Nash seconded and on the vote it was:

**RESOLVED:** That grant funding of £959.51 be awarded to FC Comets for the purchase of a new set of metal goals as outlined in section 8.1.1 of the report of the Community Engagement Team Leader.

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

## 30 GRANT APPLICATION - KNEBWORTH FC

*Audio Recording – 29 minutes 20 seconds.*

The grant application was for £200. In view of the current difficulties and the funds available to the Committee, the Chair proposed and Councillor Terry Tyler seconded and on the vote it was:

**RESOLVED:** That grant funding of £300 be awarded to Knebworth FC for the purchase of gazebos to be used on match days as outlined in 8.1.2 in the report of the Community Engagement Team Leader.

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

## 31 GRANT APPLICATION - OFFLEY PRIMARY SCHOOL

*Audio Recording – 31 minutes 50 seconds.*

Councillor Claire Strong proposed, Councillor David Barnard seconded and on the vote it was:

**RESOLVED:** That grant funding of £1250 be awarded to Offley Primary School to go towards the cost of purchasing equipment for a new afterschool facility as outlined at 8.1.3 in the report of the Community Engagement Team Leader.

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

## 32 GRANTS & COMMUNITY UPDATE

*Audio Recording – 25 minutes 38 seconds.*

*N.B The Chair proposed amendments to the grant application recommendations and these items were dealt with between the funding update and the remainder of the Officer's report.*

*The remainder of the Officer's report begins at 33 minutes 12 seconds.*

The Community Engagement Team Leader presented the report entitled Grants & Community Update along with the following appendix:

- Appendix 1 – SR Committee Budgets 2020-21

The Community Engagement Team Leader drew Members' attention to Section 10 of the Report including:

- Funds from the last budget year had been spent;
- The last grant awarded by this Committee, to Kings Walden Parish Council, had been split between the budgets for 2019/20 and 2020/21;
- There was £7399 remaining in the budget to be spent at this meeting and in the forthcoming meeting in March.

The Community Engagement Team Leader provided updates on the work of the Community Engagement team including:

- The Holocaust Memorial Day service was taking place on Wednesday 27 January at 11am;
- In connection with Holocaust Memorial Day the team had launched an art competition for children aged 5 to 11 and a creative writing competition for those between 11-18 on the theme of the event, 'Be the light in the darkness,';
- Details of the competition could be found on the Council's website;
- Nominations for the Chair's Volunteer Awards had opened with 4 categories: the Care award, the Green award, the Young People's award and the Dedication award;
- The closing date for nominations was 18 December and the selection process would begin on 11 January;
- Winners would be featured in the online Civic Reception.

Councillor Terry Tyler advised Members that the Chair's Civic Reception was moving online this year and would feature the volunteer awards, entertainments and fundraising.

It was:

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

**REASONS FOR DECISION:**

- (1) To ensure the Committee is kept informed of the work of the Community Engagement Team.
- (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.

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

*Audio recording – 39 minutes 40 seconds.*

The Chair led a discussion on Ward Matters & Members' Reports including:

20 MPH Speed Limits

**Thursday, 10th December, 2020**

The Community Engagement Team Leader advised she had been in contact with parish councils in the area considering the introduction of 20mph speed limits. The officer had spoken with Daniel Washington, Transport Officer at Hertfordshire County Council and recommended that parishes needed to raise discussion on the topic with County level Highways officers and conduct consultations in their local area.

Councillor David Barnard had spoken with David Lloyd, Police and Crime Commissioner, to discuss the introduction of 20mph limits. Around 9 parishes wanted to introduce them and he had been in touch with their clerks to form a group in order to strengthen their claim. He advised Members of the 'Drive Safe Scheme,' whereby members of the public can be trained in the use of speed recording and enforcement technology to collect data in support of their applications and urged Members to encourage the scheme in their parishes.

#### Storm Damage in Great Wymondley/Grant Application Processes

Councillor George Davies informed the Committee of recent storm damage in Great Wymondley church where grant funding would have been of assistance. Through a combination of the timeline of events and the urgency of repairs grant funding could not be applied for or approved in time and no retrospective funding was available. He asked that Members & Officers consider scenarios like this when reviewing grant application criteria.

The Community Engagement Team Leader advised Members that if urgent funding was required that they should inform Officers who had the ability to make grant awards by way of delegated decision. Funding would thus be made available without the need to seek approval of a committee.

#### St Faith's Church, Hexton

The Community Engagement Team Leader informed Members of the situation of St. Faith's Church in Hexton which was in financial difficulty. The changing demographic of the community meant the church – which was also a hybrid community centre – was not able to continue its current playgroup provision. No grant application for funds had been made and while capital funding was available the organisers needed to know to what use any available funds would be put.

Councillor David Barnard advised Members that St. Faith's was one of the first churches in the country to be converted into mixed use as a place of worship and community space.

#### Hertfordshire Constabulary Report

The Chair advised Members that the Committee was due to receive a report from the Hertfordshire Constabulary at the next meeting and asked if there were any issues which Members would like the report to touch on.

Councillor David Barnard requested that the report address the increase in open drug dealing activity within the villages and that follow-up from the priority setting meeting be encouraged.

The meeting closed at 8.24 pm

Chair