

## NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### CABINET PANEL ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT

**MEETING HELD AS A VIRTUAL MEETING  
ON MONDAY, 9TH NOVEMBER, 2020 AT 7.30 PM**

#### MINUTES

**Present:** *Councillors: Judi Billing MBE (Joint Chair) and Councillor Keith Hoskins MBE (Joint Chair), Ruth Brown, George Davies, Jean Green, Simon Harwood and Helen Oliver, Ian Albert and Michael Muir*

**In Attendance:** *Steve Crowley (Service Director - Commercial), Reuben Ayavoo (Policy and Community Engagement Manager), Sarah Kingsley (Communications Manager), Georgina Chapman (Policy Officer), Hilary Dineen (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager), Anna Gouveia (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer)*

**Also Present:** *At the commencement of the meeting approximately 16 members of the public, including registered speakers.*

#### 10 WELCOME AND REMOTE/PARTLY REMOTE MEETINGS PROTOCOL SUMMARY

*Audio recording 32 seconds*

The Chair welcomed everyone to this virtual Cabinet Panel on Community Engagement and Co-operative Development meeting 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 Manager undertook a roll call and referred Members to the Remote/Partly Remote Meetings Protocol Summary included with the agenda and full version which was available on the Council's website and included information regarding:

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

The Joint Chair, Councillor Keith Hoskins, started the meeting proper.

#### 11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

*Audio recording 5 minutes 45 seconds*

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Kay Tart and Michael Weeks.

Having given due notice Councillor Ian Albert advised that he would be substituting for Councillor Kay Tart and Councillor Michael Muir advised that he would be substituting for Councillor Michael Weeks.

## 12 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

*Audio recording 6 minutes 12 seconds*

- (1) The Chair advised that the focus of this meeting was on community engagement in the age of social media;
- (2) The Chair welcomed everyone who was participating at the meeting;
- (3) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting was being audio recorded. The audio recording would be available to view on Mod.Gov and the film recording via the NHDC YouTube channel;
- (4) 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;
- (5) Any Councillors who had not yet registered the new Mod.Gov app on their tablet device were invited to remain online at the end of the meeting to do so.

## 13 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

*Audio recording 7 minutes 2 seconds*

There was no other business notified.

## 14 INTRODUCTION BY THE JOINT CHAIRS OF THE CABINET PANEL ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CO-OPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT

*Audio recording 7 minutes 6 seconds*

The Joint Chairs gave brief introductions to this Cabinet Panel on Community Engagement and Co-operative Development meeting which was focusing on Community Engagement in the Age of Social Media. The following information was covered:

- The Joint Chairs would take turns in chairing meetings;
- Each meeting would focus on a particular theme and members would choose the themes for future meetings;
- Organisations and individuals would be invited to present at meetings and where possible the views of the public and organisations would be included;
- The main objective of the meeting was to discuss how Councillors, and the Council as a whole, engaged with the community, particularly using social media, and to consider the realistic expectations of this method of communication;
- The Council's Social Media Policy, Communications Policy and the Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy (3Cs) had been attached for information to the agenda for the meeting and could be viewed on the website.

## 15 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

*Audio recording 13 minutes 38 seconds*

The Chair invited participants to briefly introduce themselves and their organisations. Introductions were given by the following attendees:

- Caroline Mayger, Codicote Foodbank
- Alex Snelling, Royston vs Coronavirus
- Vivienne Reid, Baldock Coronavirus Support Group

- Mark and Chrissy Russell, We Are From Hitchin, We Are From Letchworth and We Are From Baldock Facebook Pages
- Nick White, Royston Reporting Facebook Page
- Aletheia Mashiri, Getting Rooted
- Tony Williams, North Herts African Caribbean Community and Diversity and Culture Group
- Anni Sander, Plastic Free Hitchin and Hitchin Reuse Project
- Sue Watkinson, Hitchin Food Provision Team
- Hannah Morgan-Gray, North Hertfordshire Centre for Voluntary Service
- Rosie Waters, Citizens Advice North Herts
- Cath Boughton, The Listing Magazine, Royston

Councillor Michael Muir declared an interest as a member of Baldock Coronavirus Support Group. He advised that he would not be taking part in the debate and any votes that would take place.

The following subjects were discussed:

- The usefulness of social media during lockdown to co-ordinate support groups;
- How to reach those who did not have access to social media;
- That different social media platforms could be used and managed in different ways (e.g. as an information source or to engage);
- Use of email or text was preferable to social media in some circumstances, e.g. requests for food vouchers and people seeking advice on sensitive matters;
- Physical publications such as magazines and newsletters were also useful to reach more people in the community.

The Chair thanked all attendees for their introductions.

## **16 MEMBERS' DISCUSSION REGARDING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

*Audio recording 42 minutes 18 seconds*

At the invitation of the Chair, all attendees, including public participants took part in a discussion on the topic of Community Engagement in the Age of Social Media. The Chair advised that the following points for discussion had been sent out in advance of the meeting as a starting point for discussion:

- Where and how do you get information from the Council?
- What is effective about the way the Council communicates?
- What is missing or could be improved about communication from the Council?

The following Members asked questions and took part in debate:

- Councillor Judi Billing;
- Councillor Simon Harwood;
- Councillor Keith Hoskins;
- Councillor Helen Oliver;
- Councillor Ruth Brown;
- Councillor Ian Albert;
- Councillor George Davies.

At the invitation of the Chair, the following members of the public asked questions and took part in debate:

- Alex Snelling;
- Cath Boughton;
- Tony Williams;
- Alexander Jarosy;
- Mark Russell.

The following topics were discussed:

- There was a key difference between engagement with individual Councillors and the Council as a whole;
- The four main communities within North Hertfordshire should consistently be included on the NHDC communication channels so that information could be re-shared by the local media providers;
- The importance of Councillors being visible 'out and about' around their communities as well as 'virtual' visibility, frequent communication and responsiveness;
- The Engage North Herts Facebook page was private – it was clarified that this was because it was a page for community groups and charities to engage with each other although the option to share content from this page could usefully be explored. The page could also be promoted more widely;
- Traditional methods of communication such as letters were still a viable method of communication for many people;
- The different approaches required for information sharing and engagement on social media (e.g. direct messaging for issues containing personal information);
- North Herts did not tend to share direct to multiple community pages as this would be too labour intensive;
- The NHDC website was a useful source of information which could be linked to from social media; the website was being re-designed over the next year;
- Greater promotion of YouTube NHDC meetings could be considered to reach a wider audience;
- Zoom was being used successfully for community engagement.

The Joint Chairs thanked everyone for their contributions which would be considered and undertook to continue to seek the input of the community on this subject at future meetings.

**RESOLVED:** That the Policy and Community Engagement Manager be requested to include the following actions in the action tracker to be presented at the next meeting of the Cabinet Panel on Community Engagement and Co-operative Development:

- To consider issues discussed at the meeting as part of the re-design of the NHDC website;
- To review the current use of YouTube and Facebook to maximise outreach.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To ensure that all potential actions are considered and where possible taken forward.

## 17 INFORMATION NOTE - WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKER

The Policy and Community Engagement Manager advised that actions would be added to the action tracker and presented at the next meeting.

He added that engagement and attendance from the public and organisations was actively encouraged and he hoped all present would continue to engage and attend future meetings.

**Monday, 9th November, 2020**

The Joint Chair advised that the next meeting of the panel would be held on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021 and should anyone have any ideas for topics for future meetings, these could be sent to the dedicated email address for the panel: [EnterprisePanel@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:EnterprisePanel@north-herts.gov.uk).

**RESOLVED:** That the Policy and Community Engagement Manager be requested to update the Work Programme and Action Tracker following each meeting and present it at all future meetings of the Panel.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To ensure that the Cabinet Panel on Community Engagement and Co-operative Development is able to plan its workload and monitor actions.

The meeting closed at 8.59 pm

Chair