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NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

BALDOCK AND DISTRICT COMMITTEE

MEETING HELD IN THE NORTH HERTS LD DAY SERVICE, GREYSLATES COURT,
WESTON WAY, BALDOCK, HERTFORDSHIRE, SG7 6ER
ON MONDAY, 4TH OCTOBER, 2021 AT 7.30 PM

MINUTES

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

In Attendance:

Ashley Hawkins (Community Engagement Officer), Simon Ellis (Development and Conservation Manager) and Andrew Mills (Service Manager - Greenspace)

Also Present:

At the commencement of the meeting approximately 2 members of the public, including registered speakers.

15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 1 minute 4 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Juan Cowell.

16 MINUTES - 21 JUNE 2021

Audio Recording – 1 minute 28 seconds

Councillor Jim McNally proposed and Councillor Michael Muir seconded and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 21 June 2021 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

17 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 2 minutes 14 seconds

There was no other business notified.

18 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 2 minutes 20 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) 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.

- (4) The Chair announced that the Boundary Review was now underway and would run for 5 weeks to 8 November 2021. All Members and public were encouraged to get involved and have a say on the future of the Council.

19 UPDATE ON IVEL SPRINGS

Audio Recording – 6 minutes 52 seconds

A verbal presentation was given by Andrew Mills, Service Manager – Greenspace, regarding the works at Ivel Springs, which included:

- The boardwalk was due to be replaced by the end of October 2021, dependant on weather conditions, and would be replaced with recycled plastic. The replacement work would be done by volunteers.
- The recent sewage leaks on the site had been caused by a crack in a pipe 5 metres deep. Anglian Water were relining old pipes, rather than completely replacing.
- Andrew Mills would be meeting Anglian Water on site on the 5 October 2021.
- The two issues with sewage leakage on the site have led to a better working relationship between NHDC and Anglian Water.
- Updates on the water augmentation at the site, with the hope that boreholes would soon be drilled to pump out chalk water and deliver it away from the Springs.

The following Members and members of the public asked questions and took part in the debate:

- Councillor Michael Muir
- Councillor Tom Tyson
- Councillor Jim McNally
- Councillor Michael Weeks
- Lisa Patterson

Andrew Mills, Service Manager – Greenspace, advised:

- Feasibility studies were currently underway to look into the drilling of boreholes, with two options currently being considered. There was a desire to see this move as quickly as possible.
- Some 'misconnections' of pipes had led to areas seeing sewage leaks and previous works had seen water channels to draw this away.
- Anglian Water were primarily responsible for dealing with the issues arriving from misconnections, however they are not proactive in chasing the source of any issues. Rather they will manage the consequences of any sewage leakages.
- Council Officers are on site regularly and will pick up, and deal with, any issues and make sure relevant bodies are alerted to conduct works.
- Previous leaks have been paid for by Anglian Water.
- Where boreholes have been drilled before on the site, there have been no reported instances of pollution.
- The issue was currently being contained and the legal obligations were being met. Should this change and the impact of the misconnections increase then further actions will be taken.
- Environment Agency have been clear that the volume of extraction will not be increased. Affinity Water will need to find alternative ways to ensure water supply to Baldock, such as running initiatives to encourage reductions in household water usage or bringing water in from Grafham Water.
- Reedbeds were managed by NHDC and annual cutting took place. Further planting could be looked at in the next Greenspace Action Plan for the site.

- Herts County Council Rights of Way were looking at improvements which could be made to footpaths on site.

Councillor Steve Jarvis, Executive Member for Environment and Leisure, advised:

- There was not an understanding of how widespread contamination issues from misconnections was, but this would need to be looked into and circulated to Members when available.
- Possibility of the respringing of Ivel Springs causing the sewage misconnection to worsen would need to be discussed with the contractors at Anglian water. As a consequence of previous issues, the Council had a good working relationship with Affinity and Anglian Water.
- It may be worth inviting Affinity Water to a Committee Meeting so they can explain their plans and asked questions directly.
- In the case of bringing water from Grafham Water, a water treatment plant would be built to ensure issues which had previously occurred from this would not happen again.

20 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - BALDOCK DISTRICT GUIDES

Audio recording – 45 minutes 44 seconds

A verbal presentation was given by Joanne Newton and Lisa Patterson, from Baldock District Guides, regarding their grant application, which included:

- Current guttering needed to be replaced and additional guttering would need to be fitted.
- Covid-19 restrictions have had an impact on the small Guide group and has put strain on finances, as fundraising had stopped over the past 18 months.
- Although some groups had closed, the first positive step towards recovery was demonstrated with the opening of a new Ranger group for 14 to 18 year olds.
- The building is shared with other community groups.
- Funding would help to ensure the future of Girl Guiding in Baldock, as other suitable and dedicated space is at a premium in the town.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Michael Weeks

In response to questions Joanne Newton and Lisa Patterson advised:

- Currently there was the same number of people on waiting lists as there were in the pack showing that the interest in the Guides was there across the area served by Baldock District Guides.
- Repairs to the Guide building will be required in order for Girl Guiding to grow in the town. The roof of the building had been replaced in 2014.
- The group also support volunteering opportunities through Duke of Edinburgh awards.

21 GRANT APPLICATION - BALDOCK DISTRICT GUIDES

Audio Recording – 61 minutes 15 seconds

Members held a discussion regarding which budgets the grant funding would come from.

It was confirmed that £600 had already been allocated to the group from the County Locality Funds and the group themselves had £500 to contribute.

Councillor Michael Muir proposed and Councillor Michael Weeks seconded and it was:

RESOLVED: That grant funding of £1450 be awarded to Baldock District Guides to assist towards replacing existing guttering and facias on the Baldock Guide Hut, as well as adding additional guttering.

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

22 GRANTS AND COMMUNITY UPDATE

Audio Recording – 88 minutes 20 seconds

The Community Engagement Officer presented the report entitled 'Grants and Community Update' and included:

- Update on the outstanding balances left in budgets following the revised amount allocated to the Baldock District Guides.
- Review of possible future funding requests.
- The Eco Event in Baldock on 30 October 2021 would need to be added to the future events list.
- Event calendar through to the end of 2021 is looking good.

Councillor Michael Muir proposed and Councillor Michael Weeks seconded and following a vote it was:

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

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (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 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.

23 ANNUAL UPDATE ON S106 OBLIGATIONS

Audio Recording – 68 minutes 35 seconds

The Planning Control and Conservation Manager presented the report entitled 'Annual Update on S106 Obligations for Baldock and District Committee' and gave a verbal presentation which included:

- Bio Diversity Net Gain in planning was becoming more important, which was normally driven by Herts County Council. This was hoped to be link to some Council land where net gains could be made here to replace lost bio diversity in Section 106 sites, using the ecologists at County level.

- Master Planning approach to big sites which would encompass all aspects and Council could take a lead in which they want developers to do.
- When Local Plan has been passed, the Master Plan will become more relevant and this will form the basis of future annual reports from the Planning Control and Conservation Manager.

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

- Councillor Steve Jarvis
- Councillor Tom Tyson
- Councillor Michael Muir

In response to questions the Planning Control and Conservation Manager advised:

- Developments over 100 dwellings would be on Master Plan, but those developments that do not meet this would need to be looked at. This was previously done with the support of the Community Engagement Team, but has now been moved across to consultation with Ward Councillors.
- The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was not preferred by the Council, as this would go into a central pot to be split across district, which was not ideal for a rural district.
- CILs would require governance setting up in order to decide how the collected money would be spent.
- These funds usually have to be spent within 7 years, but this does not apply to Unilateral Undertakings. There has only been £7000 of unspent Section 106 money sent back since 2006, which highlighted that this money is almost always spent.

Councillor Michael Muir proposed and Councillor Michael Weeks seconded and following a vote it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Members note the content of this report.
- (2) That Members agree that a report or note shall continue to be presented on an annual basis to the Area Committee, which sets out full records of all Section 106 activity for the preceding financial year and which reflects changes in legislation and practice.
- (3) That, other than where a contribution has been negotiated for a specific purpose or project, Ward Members of the area where the Section 106 Obligation or Unilateral Undertaking funding generated and the Area Committee be consulted prior to funding being allocation away from that area. Members must note that the discretionary funds are rapidly diminishing and will not be replaced under current legislation and practice, for reasons that are set out in this report.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

- (1) To ensure that there is a robust system for negotiating and managing Section 106 Obligations and Unilateral Undertakings, that records activity for each financial year and is placed in the public domain.
- (2) To ensure that the process is kept under constant review and Member scrutiny and that the risk associated with this activity is managed in an appropriate manner.

24 WARD MATTERS AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS - MEMBERS' REPORTS

Audio recording – 92 minutes 45 seconds

There were no reports raised by Members.

The meeting closed at 9.03pm.

Chair