

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

BALDOCK AND DISTRICT COMMITTEE

**MEETING HELD IN THE BALDOCK COMMUNITY CENTRE, SIMPSON DRIVE, BALDOCK
ON MONDAY, 4TH DECEMBER, 2017 AT 7.30 PM**

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors Michael Muir (Chairman), Steve Jarvis, Jim McNally and Michael Weeks.*

In Attendance:

Ashley Hawkins (Communities Officer) and Ian Gourlay (Committee and Member Services Manager)

Also Present:

Ms Julie Barker (Environment Agency) and Mr Alessandro Marsili (Affinity Water).

At the commencement of the meeting 3 members of the public, including public speakers, were present.

34 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Janine Paterson (Vice-Chairman) and Valentine Shanley.

35 MINUTES - 4 SEPTEMBER 2017

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Baldock and District Committee meeting held on 4 September 2017 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

36 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business notified.

37 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (1) The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, including the public speakers and Julie Barker from the Environment Agency and Alessandro Marsili from Affinity Water.
- (2) The Chairman advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be audio recorded; and
- (3) The Chairman 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.

38 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - BALDOCK BOWLS CLUB

Mr Spencer Dean and Mr Brian Leadley gave a verbal presentation regarding an application from Baldock Bowls Club requesting grant funding to assist with the costs of running a bowling programme with students from Knights Templar School over a three year period commencing in Spring/Summer 2018.

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Mr Dean advised that the Club was hoping to develop bowls as a youth sport. The Club already had some incredibly talented young bowlers amongst its rank, including two youth internationals. Shortly after he had assumed the role of Chairman of the Club, Mr Dean was introduced to the Head Teacher of Knights Templar School, who was extremely supportive of a joint venture between the School and the Club to promote youth bowling.

Mr Dean stated that he and the School Sports Team Head had put together a strategy and plan aimed at increasing interest in bowls (including on-site school visits). The Club had also interacted with some of the School's PE lessons, which were bowling sessions held at the Club. The Club had also held an Open Day, which had been well-attended by families and teachers.

Mr Dean explained that the Club was looking to take on 18 children per year for properly planned training sessions, in conjunction with the Hertfordshire Bowls Coaching Association. There would be several other one-off events tied in as part of the training course.

Mr Dean commented that many senior bowlers from other clubs had left those clubs to join Baldock, in order to develop their children as youth bowlers.

Mr Dean advised that the Club would be charging each child £1 a week for 20 weeks. The coaching time would be free, but equipment would need to be purchased. The Club had donated £1,000 towards the project, but the total cost would be £4,320 for 54 children over 3 years. It would be an initial 3 year project, but with the hope that it would be successful and continue for years to come.

Mr Dean stated that it was intended that the remaining £3,320 would be acquired throughout the 3 years, as not all the funding would be required in Year 1. He therefore asked the Committee to provide as much further financial support to the initiative as possible.

Following a period of questions and answers, the Chairman thanked Mr Deane and Mr Leadley for their presentation.

39 PRESENTATION FROM THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

Ms Julie Barker (Environment Agency), assisted by Mr Alessandro Marsili (Affinity Water), gave a presentation regarding water levels in the River Ivel.

Ms Barker advised that she was attending the meeting to answer Members' questions following Affinity Water's presentation to the Committee's previous meeting in September 2017.

Ms Barker stated that anyone who abstracted water from bore holes or a river would need a licence from the Environment Agency (EA). The EA had to judge whether or not there was sufficient water to enable a grant of the licence, and that there would not be any adverse impact on third parties, other licence holders or the water environment. A justification for the need for the water would also be required.

Ms Barker commented that the legal system came about following the Water Resources Act 1963. Before then, anybody could abstract water. The boreholes currently operated by Affinity water near Baldock were all pre-1963. She thought that one was drilled in the 1920s and the others a little later.

Ms Barker explained that when the legislation changed in 1963, those responsibility for each borehole had been required to apply to prove that they had been pumping at certain quantities. If so proven, they were provided with a Licence of Right. This was the situation for the Baldock boreholes.

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Ms Barker advised that, since 1963, the EA had granted licences to other users. The EA had to publish plans and policies on how it allocated water to certain catchments. In most cases in her area, the ground water was fully committed (ie. no more abstraction licences were being issued). Summer surface water was also fully committed, but the EA were still issuing licences concerning water taken from rivers above certain flow thresholds.

Ms Barker stated that East Anglia was an area of low rainfall. The annual average rainfall was about 600mm, but 450mm of that evaporated (mostly in the summer), leaving only 150mm to permeate into the ground for abstraction purposes.

Ms Barker commented that the EA had bid for Affinity Water to undertake a project on the River Ivel. In common with other water authorities, Affinity Water were funded in 5 year blocks (called Asset Management periods). Affinity Water were currently in the middle of Asset Management period 6 (undertaking investigatory work), and that EA had lobbied that this was a project on which Affinity Water could spend their customers' money. Following this investigation and, if appropriate, the EA would lobby for the next 5 year block (2020-25) to address any problems.

Ms Barker explained that the current investigatory (options and appraisal) stage aimed to discover the cause and effect between abstraction and the river. There was no gauging station on the River Ivel, and so there was no historical flow record as the EA would have for other rivers. The EA did monitor water quality and ecology, and Affinity Water had drilled additional observation boreholes. Some increased flow measurement had been undertaken over the past few years (from November 2014). A report on those two years had been prepared, and cost and benefits options were to be looked at in order to improve the flows.

The Chairman advised that the older residents of Baldock remembered the River Ivel flowing freely, but now it dried up for at least six months of the year. In 2017 it had only flowed for 3 months of the year. He asked if this was because there was so much water being taken from boreholes. He also asked if water could be pumped to fill in the ponds adjacent to the river, so that they could be used by wildlife.

Ms Barker replied that the amount of permitted/licensed water to be taken from boreholes had not changed since the 1960s. How much water taken up to their maximum amount allowed had changed due to increased demand for water as a result of additional housing development. Water abstraction had most likely doubled since 2000. However, this increase was still not in excess of the licensed amount. There was also the variable wet and dry years, and another dry winter could cause some problems with water supplies.

Ms Barker advised that the level of the River Ivel rose because of rainfall and run-off, but also because of a base element from the chalk soil. She conceded that the lack of flow could partly be due to the increased abstraction over the years for the reasons previously stated.

Ms Barker explained that one option could be an augmentation scheme (a standalone borehole to pump in water to the top of the Ivel Springs). This would work best should the wet cycles of weather be more frequent, and had been carried out successfully elsewhere, including the River Hiz.

Ms Barker commented that the driver for the investigatory work was the EU Water Framework Directive, which required Government's to re-look at water was licensed, in order to achieve good ecological status in rivers (ie. invertebrates, fish etc.). Hence, the River Ivel came into focus because of the perception that there was insufficient flow for these creatures. The EA was mindful of the ponds, but the major driver for the project was the health of the river.

In response to a Member's question regarding the boreholes, Ms Barker stated that there were three boreholes and, the way the groundwater flowed through the aquifer, one took water away from Pix Brook, but the cones of depression of the other two eclipsed the top of

the River Ivel. The issue was still being quantified by the EA and Affinity water, as part of the options and appraisals work.

The Committee noted that Affinity water would be shortly presenting some options to the EA, including a reduction in water abstraction; augmentation schemes; morphological works; and/or a combination of these options. A balance between costs and benefits would need to be associated with each of the options.

Ms Barker added that once an option was agreed between the EA and Affinity water, the latter would bid for the funding to carry out the scheme during the next (2020-25) 5 year round of funding. A decision on whether or not the funding would be approved would not be made until November 2019, ready for the spend to commence in April 2020.

The Chairman thanked the Environment Agency and Affinity Water representatives for their presentation and attendance at the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the representatives from the Environment Agency and Affinity Water be thanked for their presentation.

REASON FOR DECISION: To keep Members of the Committee abreast of water level issues on the River Ivel and Ivel Springs.

40 GREEN SPACE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY - PROGRESS: INFORMATION NOTE

The Committee considered an Information Note prepared by the Parks and Countryside Manager in respect of progress regarding the Green Space Management Strategy.

RESOLVED: That the Parks and Countryside Manager be requested to write to Committee Members with further details on progress in respect of the Business Case for Bakers Road pavilion and any expressions of interest by community groups to take over the Ivel Road play area.

REASON FOR DECISION: To comment on the Green Space Management Strategy Information Note.

41 BALDOCK COMMUNITY EVENTS

Councillor Jim McNally advised that the Baldock Christmas Fair had taken place over the weekend of 2/3 December 2017. More people had attended the event than in previous years. It had been very successful, and he was aware of only one negative comment on social media. It was the first Christmas Fair organised by the Baldock Community Events Forum, and a de-briefing would be held in the near future. However, positive feedback had already been received from a number of major contributors to the Fair.

Councillor McNally stated that there had also been a Christmas Tree Lights switch-on, conducted by a local celebrity.

The Committee formally acknowledged the input of the Communities Officer in to Baldock Christmas Fair and thanked him for his time and effort in helping to bring the Fair to successful fruition.

42 GRANTS AND COMMUNITY UPDATE

The Communities Officer introduced the report of the Communities Manager in respect of Grants and Community Update.

The Communities Officer drew attention to the Committee's updated Budget for 2017/17, broken down by ward, set out at Paragraph 7.3 of the report.

The Communities Officer advised that the Balstock Family Run Weekend had been held for the sixth time in Baldock High Street on the weekend of 9/10 September 2017. As well as the activities on the High Street, there was live music performed in all of the Baldock Public Houses throughout the weekend. The event had proved as popular as ever and passed without incident, and had raised funding for six charities, as set out in Paragraph 8.1.2 of the report.

The Communities Officer stated that the Baldock Community Fireworks had been held for a fifth time on Sunday, 5 November 2017. The event was again well supported by the people of Baldock and surrounding villages with just under 2,000 people attending the show. As well as being a good fundraiser for Hartsfield PTA, Knights Templar School and Baldock Brownies, the event also generated £3,000 profit, which was being shared amongst 6 schools in Baldock.

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

REASON FOR DECISION: To keep Members of the Committee apprised of the latest developments in community activities in the Baldock and District area.

43 GRANT APPLICATION - BALDOCK BOWLS CLUB

The Committee had been impressed by the Bowls Club's presentation and, mindful of the fact that the costings were spread over three years and that under the Council's Grants Policy organisations were not able to re-apply for grant funding for a period of two years, it was agreed that a grant of £1,500 be awarded, subject to the agreement of the Arbury and Baldock East Ward Members.

RESOLVED: That grant funding of £1,500 be awarded to Baldock Bowls Club taken in proportionate shares from the Baldock Town, Weston & Sandon and (subject to the subsequent agreement of the respective ward councillors) Arbury and Baldock East Ward Budgets, to assist with the costs of running a bowling programme with students from Knights Templar School over a three year period commencing in Spring/Summer 2018.

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

44 WARD MATTERS AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS - MEMBERS' REPORTS

The Chairman advised that he had committed the entirety of his £90,000 Hertfordshire County Council Highways Localities Budget for 2017/18. A number of projects were still to be completed. He had also committed about £50,000 of his 2018/19 Budget. He invited Members to approach him with suggestions for any further schemes.

Councillor Steve Jarvis reported that he had also spent all of his 2017/18 Hertfordshire County Council Highways Localities Budget. He was in the process of putting together his planned schemes for 2018/19.

The meeting closed at 8.47 pm

Chairman