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NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

SOUTHERN RURAL COMMITTEE

MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, GERONON ROAD, LETCHWORTH
ON THURSDAY, 3RD MARCH, 2022 AT 7.30 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Councillor Faye S Frost (Chair), Councillor George Davies (Vice-Chair), Ian Moody, Sam North, Claire Strong and Mandi Tandi*

In Attendance: *Claire Morgan (Community Engagement Team Leader), Becca Edwards (Policy and Community Engagement Trainee) and Louis Mutter (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer)*

Also Present:

At the commencement of the meeting approximately 5 members of the public, including registered speakers.

73 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 1:20

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors John Bishop, David Barnard, Lisa Nash and Terry Tyler

74 MINUTES - 21 OCTOBER 2021

Audio Recording – 1:42

Councillor Faye Frost, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Mandi Tandi seconded and, following a vote, it was:

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

75 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 2:23

There was no other business notified.

76 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 2:32

- (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.

77 HERTFORDSHIRE CONSTABULARY

Audio Recording: 3:08

Sergeant Guy Westwood, Hertfordshire Constabulary, provided Members of the Committee with an update on crime and police matters in the Southern Rural area. This included:

- The Neighbourhood team has been split into three teams across North Herts, which has freed Alan Clarke up to do work behind the scenes;
- The Police priorities used to be set every three months, they are now set every 6 months with a 3 month review;
- The three priorities are: Fly tipping, Residential burglary and Speeding;
- Fly-tipping always comes up and remains a priority in this area;
- Covert cameras are being placed in regular fly-tipping spots;
- Residential burglary was a priority to focus on as the team believed there would be an increase of crimes due to the public returning to work;
- Would have expected all crime to increase from previous year due to lockdown;
- Hertfordshire as a whole has seen an crime increase of 4.3%. North Herts has seen a 1.5% decrease. Southern Rural has seen a 13% decrease in all crimes, from 890 last year to 774 this year;
- 19% decrease in arson and criminal damage;
- 35.8% decrease in public order offences;
- 33.6% decrease in theft;
- 37.3% decrease in vehicle offences;
- 50% decrease in theft from motor vehicles;
- 60% decrease in business burglaries;
- 50% decrease in racially aggravated crimes; 2 this year;
- 57% decrease in shoplifting;
- Increase in hate crimes – could be down to encouragement to report it;
- 110 hate crimes this year compared to 96 last year;
- Sex offences have increased from 23 last year to 49 this year, a 113% increase;
- Business robberies have increased from 0 last year to 1 this year. Personal robberies have increased from 3 to 4;
- Residential burglary has seen a 55% increase, 31 this year and 20 last year;
- Drug offences have seen an increase from 20 to 26;
- Theft of motor vehicles have increased by 33%. 18 offences to 24;
- Fraud crimes are not included in these figures, as where the crime is reported is usually not where it is originally happening;
- The team have been asking members of public to report any non-emergency reports on an Echo Link;
- Police priorities are directly influenced by consultations with the public, through Echo Link reporting and OWL surveys.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Faye Frost
- Councillor Sam North
- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Mandi Tandi
- Councillor George Davies

In response to questions, Sergeant Guy Westwood advised:

- Plain clothed police officers have been assisting in Offley to focus on drug offences;
- Members of public might not think there is a police presence when unmarked police vehicles are patrolling;
- The team will post on social media when the priorities are reassessed;
- Over the last 5 years the team size has stayed the same; Covid has been a problem but numbers have remained;
- The team does liaise with the Bedfordshire police team, can be difficult to get them to engage with a problem they don't see as a priority;
- The OWL survey and Echo Link is where information is gathered as well as a Member's meeting;
- The Bedford Road camera van is not affiliated with the Neighbourhood team;
- Personally handing the speeding letters to members of the public is a good way of preventing further offences;
- Individual wards crime statistics can be provided outside of the meeting;
- Anecdotal evidence can always be reported.

The Chair thanked Sergeant Guy Westwood for his report and for his team's work in the area.

78 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 46:15

Councillor Moody announced that he was declaring a registration of interest on the item due to being a member of Codicote Tennis Club, and was therefore not able to debate or vote on the grant application.

Maxine Sanders, Codicote Tennis Club, thanked the Chair for the opportunity to address the Committee in support of their grant application and gave a presentation including:

- Since submitting the application the Club has received feedback from the Low Carbon Workspace Grant, which rejected their application due to not meeting the CO2 thresholds;
- Had applied to the Codicote Parish Council and they were unable to support the application due to a lack of budget funds;
- Applied to Luton Airport Community Grant which is still in early stages;
- Limited ability to run fundraisers due to Covid;
- The component parts of the existing halogen lights are becoming obsolete;
- The LED lights proposed are more environmentally friendly, cheaper to operate and don't require an ongoing maintenance cost.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Sam North
- Councillor Faye Frost
- Councillor Claire Strong

In response to questions Maxine Sanders advised:

- The Club has £10,000 of their own money as well as £1000 from County Councillor Richard Thake's locality budget the rest is needed from grant applications;
- The floodlights are used all year, including the final hour in the evening before closing during summer months;

The Chair thanked Codicote Tennis Club for their presentation.

Elaine Derrick and Alison Maple, Pirton Joycare, thanked the Chair for the opportunity to address the Committee in support of their grant application, and gave a presentation including:

- Joycare received charitable status and was thought to last 3-4 years. 20 years later Pirton Joycare is a valued part of Pirton village life;
- The organisation organises lunches at local pubs, monthly shopping trips and occasional outings;
- The organisation also transports people to medical appointments, to pick up prescriptions and pick up shopping;
- Joycare are hosting a Platinum Jubilee afternoon tea party on Thursday 2 June for the elderly community;
- The tea party provides an opportunity for the elderly community to get together and build new relationships following two years of Covid lockdowns.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Sam North

In response to questions Elaine Derrick and Alison Maple advised:

- Joycare has an email distribution list of current members, a village magazine as well as a Facebook page.

The Chair thanked Pirton Joycare for their presentation.

Peter Johnson, Pirton Players, thanked the Chair for the opportunity to address the Committee in support of their grant application and gave a presentation including:

- Pirton Players is an amateur dramatic group;
- They put on plays and musicals; at least two a year;
- The proposal is for a lighting control desk, meaning the operator can control the lights on stage;
- The new lighting desk also provides a lot more facilities than the older one has;
- LED lights are a lot more versatile, it allows different colours to be used during a play.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Faye Frost

In response to questions Peter Johnson advised:

- The board cost £1500 and the LED lights cost £1500;
- County Councillor David Barnard put in an application 2 years ago and it failed;

The Chair thanked Peter Johnson for his presentation.

The Chair informed to the Committee that Lisa Lathane was unable to attend the Committee, and read out a written statement on behalf of Preston Parish Council in respect of their grant application. Points in the statement included:

- The application is for a grant of £526.80 for a new cabinet for the defibrillator;
- The defibrillator is housed in a cabinet in the Red Lion carpark;
- The cabinet needs to be replaced as it is getting old;
- The cabinet needs to be on an electrical circuit to be kept warm at winter;

- The Parish Council will be paying for the installation of the cabinet;
- Preston has a lot of visitors from walkers and cyclists.

79 GRANTS & COMMUNITY UPDATE

Audio Recording: 1:09:55

The Community Engagement Team Leader presented the report entitled Grant and Community Update along with Appendix 1 – 2021/22 financial year budget sheet and drew attention to the following:

- It was stated in the report that Codicote Tennis Club had received £8000 throughout 2015/16 when they had actually received \$2000;
- The last grant funding application they received was for £3500 for artificial turf two years ago.
- There is very little section 106 funding available.

It was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee endorse the actions of the Community Engagement Team to promote greater community capacity and wellbeing in the Southern Rural area.

80 GRANT APPLICATION: CODICOTE TENNIS CLUB

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Sam North
- Councillor Faye Frost
- Councillor Claire Strong

Councillor Faye Frost, as Chair proposed and Councillor Claire Strong seconded and, following the vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee **DEFER** consideration of this application to until the next meeting.

REASON FOR REFERRAL: To allow officers and the applicant to further explore financial options beside grant funding to support the project and, to consider the grant application after the allocation of the 2022/23 budget.

81 GRANT APPLICATION: PIRTON JOYCARE

Councillor Claire Strong proposed and Councillor George Davies seconded and, following the vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That grant funding of **£750** be awarded to Pirton Joycare towards an event to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee for over 60's as outlined in 8.1.2 of the officer's report.

82 GRANT APPLICATION: PIRTON PLAYERS

Councillor Claire Strong proposed and Councillor Faye Frost seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That grant funding of **£1500** be awarded to Pirton Players towards the purchase of LED stage lighting equipment and control desk as outlined in 8.1.3 of the officer's report.

83 GRANT APPLICATION: PRESTON PARISH COUNCIL

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Sam North
- Councillor Faye Frost
- Councillor George Davies

Councillor Faye Frost, as chair, proposed and Councillor Sam North seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That grant funding of **£527** be awarded to Preston Parish Council towards the purchase of a cabinet for a defibrillator as outlined in 8.1.4 of the officer's report.

84 WARD MATTERS AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS - MEMBERS' REPORTS

Audio recording – 1:27:15

Members had no updates on Ward Matters or Outside Organisations.

The meeting closed at 8:59 pm

Chair