

**NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**BALDOCK AND DISTRICT COMMITTEE**

**Meeting held at Baldock Community Centre, Baldock  
Monday 6 March 2017 at 7.30 p.m.**

**MINUTES**

**PRESENT:** *Councillors: Jim McNally (Chairman), Michael Muir (Vice-Chairman), Steve Jarvis, Janine Paterson and Michael Weeks.*

**IN ATTENDANCE:** *Simon Ellis (Development and Conservation Manager), Ashley Hawkins (Communities Officer), Amelia McNally (Committee and Member Services Officer) and Hilary Dineen (Committee and Member Services Officer).*

**ALSO PRESENT:** *At commencement of the meeting Councillors Lynda Needham and David Levett and approximately 10 members of the public.*

**42. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Valentine Shanley.

**43. MINUTES – 5 DECEMBER 2017**

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the Baldock and District Committee meeting held on 5 December 2016 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

**44. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business notified.

**45. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

(1) The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting particularly Councillor Lynda Needham, Councillor David Levett, Chief Inspector Julie Wheatley, Sergeant Al Clarke and those making presentations to the Committee.

(2) The Chairman advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be audio recorded;

(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.

(4) The Chairman introduced and welcomed Amelia McNally, a new Committee and Member Services Officer and advised that she would receive training over the next few meetings in order to become the clerk to this Committee;

(5) The Chairman advised that Hilary Dineen (Committee and Member Services Officer) would be the clerk to this meeting.

**46. HERTFORDSHIRE CONSTABULARY**

Chief Inspector Julie Wheatley and Sergeant Al Clarke (Hertfordshire Constabulary) thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal update on the issues being addressed by the Hertfordshire Constabulary in the Baldock and District area.

Chief Inspector Wheatley introduced Sergeant Al Clark, who was the sergeant for Letchworth and Baldock and advised that she would provide an end of year update and a breakdown of some of the crime figures.

### Burglary Dwelling

There had been 20 offences and this figure was similar to the previous year.

There had been a lot of dwelling burglaries in Hitchin where the offenders travelled in from Northampton and Luton.

### Burglary Other

There had been a reduction of 37 offences on the previous year.

### Theft from Motor Vehicles

This had increased by 17 offences on the previous year.

### Criminal Damage to Cars

There had been an increase of 37 offences on the previous year, which included a spate of 11 offences by one person.

Sergeant Clarke advised that the spike in this category had been as a result of drunkenness and had now petered out.

### Violence Against the Person

The number of offences in this category had significantly reduced.

### Domestic Abuse

The number of domestic abuse offences was lower in Baldock.

### Shoplifting

There had been a small increase in the number of shoplifting offences.

### North Hertfordshire

There had been a few high profile cases in North Hertfordshire being the murder in Royston of Helen Bailey and some nasty assaults in Hitchin and Baldock.

It was rare to get serious offences in Baldock and the rate of detection was very good.

Visibility of the Police was difficult in Baldock, but they did have a base at the Community Centre.

Members commented that for a number of years North Hertfordshire had the lowest crime figures in Hertfordshire and Baldock had the lowest crime figures in North Herts and asked whether this remained the case.

Chief Inspector Wheatley advised that this remained the case.

Sergeant Clarke informed Members that detection rates in North Hertfordshire were also higher than the County figures.

Members were pleased to note the low levels of crime in North Hertfordshire and suggested that this be publicised by way of a press release. They felt that the successes were due to the work of the Neighbourhood Policing Teams and that the challenge was to minimise the fear of crime, which was worse than the actual crime level.

In respect of resourcing, Members were aware that there it was important to place resources where they were needed but were concerned that the removal of officers from the Neighbourhood Teams on a regular basis would eventually render them ineffective and asked whether there were any trends to this that would be demonstrated by the abstraction figures. They commented that they would like to be able to reassure residents that Police were rarely taken away from Baldock.

Chief Inspector Wheatley advised that she had been tasked with rewriting the abstraction policy, including the Neighbourhood Team and the changing demands and the difference that abstractions made.

The main duties that officers were called to undertake were as hospital guards and for mental health issues despite this the Baldock Neighbourhood Team rarely had abstractions.

Chief Inspector Wheatley agreed to provide regular abstraction figures in relation to the Baldock Neighbourhood Team, for the information of the Members.

Members noted that the policy of part time street lighting had now been in force for about 3 years and asked whether there had been an increase in crime during the unlit hours.

Chief Inspector Wheatley advised that there had been no increase in crime during the times that the street lights were unlit but the fear of crime remained high.

Members commented that there had been an increase in hare coursing and that they believed that there were officers who spent a lot of time tackling this issue.

Chief Inspector Wheatley informed Members that they had use of 4x4s and quad bikes and that the Rural Specials were qualified to use these pieces of equipment. Most of the hare coursing activity was on the border of North Herts and Luton.

Members commented that there were a lot of activities for young people in Baldock and that, as a result, there seemed to be a lot less groups of youths hanging around and the incidents of graffiti and use of unlicensed motorbikes had reduced.

Sergeant Clarke agreed that problems with young people had reduced and advised that someone had been apprehended regarding the incidents a few months ago. He informed Members that there were systems in place to target areas where issues became a problem.

The Chairman thanked Chief Inspector Wheatley and Sergeant Clarke for their informative presentation and for the work they and their team undertake for the Baldock and District area.

#### **47. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – ROTARY CLUB OF BALDOCK**

Prior to the item being discussed Councillor Michael Muir declared a declarable interest as he was a member of the Rotary Club of Baldock. He advised that, as he would not personally benefit from any grant funding awarded, he would remain in the room and take part in the debate and vote.

Mr Mick Williams, President of the Rotary Club of Baldock, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding the grant funding application for the Rotary Club of Baldock.

Mr Williams advised Members that the Club was working to expand the Christmas lights in Baldock Town Centre to beyond the Cock and the Boot.

The expansion would involve putting in power points and purchasing new lights which cost approximately £400 for one panel measuring one metre by one metre.

Many of the lights at the bottom end of the Town were purchased in 1978 and were now aged, with technology overtaking the ability of the lights and they were looking to replace the frames and continue with light strings in order to improve the Christmas feel.

The total cost of the project was £4,300 for which an application had been made for grant funding of £2,000.

Mr Williams advised that there had been some problems last year with the Christmas tree and that to mitigate this they were holding meetings to discuss the possibility of holding a light switch on event around the tree.

Members suggested that the problems regarding the tree light being dim probably meant that new lights should be purchased and, in respect of a switch on event, suggested that the Community Centre Carol Singing could be integrated into a switch on event.

Mr Williams assured Members that he would liaise with them regarding any switch on event.

The Chairman thanked Mr Williams for his presentation.

**48. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – BALDOCK TOWN TWINNING ASSOCIATION**

Prior to the item being discussed Councillor Jim McNally declared a declarable interest as he was one of the NHDC representatives to the Baldock Town Twinning Association. He advised that this was not so significant as to prevent him from taking part in the debate and vote.

Prior to the item being discussed Councillor Michael Weeks declared a declarable interest as he was one of the NHDC representative to the Baldock Town Twinning Association. He advised that this was not so significant as to prevent him from taking part in the debate and vote.

Prior to the item being discussed Councillor Michael Muir declared declarable interest as he and his wife were members of the Baldock Town Twinning Association. He advised that this was not so significant as to prevent him from taking part in the debate and vote.

Mr Paul Lockett, Chair of Baldock Town Twinning Association, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding the grant funding application for the Baldock Town Twinning Association.

Mr Lockett reminded Members that Baldock had been twinned with Eisenberg in Germany since 1988 and Sanvignes-les-Mines in France since 1997 and that each year they either visited or were visited by representatives from these towns.

Baldock was due to host Sanvignes on the twentieth anniversary of twinning in 2017 and Eisenburg on the thirtieth anniversary in 2018 and would like to arrange something a little special for these events, which inevitably meant more expense.

A lot of money was spent in the local community during these events for instance the booking of hotel rooms, coach hire and entertainers.

The Association was totally self-funded, apart from any grant funding received, they held fundraising events including a murder mystery production, which was the main fundraising event this year.

Membership of the Association was both dwindling and aging, the challenge was to encourage younger members and they were working with Knights Templar School towards this end.

The grant application was for £1,000 which was approximately 25 percent of the cost of both anniversary events excluding food and drink.

The Chairman thanked Mr Lockett for his presentation.

**49. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – BALDOCK METHODIST CHURCH**

Mrs Gill Frances thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding the grant funding application for Baldock Methodist Church.

Mrs Frances advised that Baldock Methodist Church was trying to reach out to and support the community and to this end there were many groups now meeting at the Church as follows:

- Monday & Friday mornings – Dipsy Dancers, involving young children;
- Tuesday mornings – Tiny Tots, involving parents, grandparents, carers and children up to 3 years of age – tea, toast and cereals were provided.
- Wednesday mornings – re-starting the coffee mornings;

Mrs Frances informed Members that the Church was built in 1850 and it was very difficult to keep old buildings going but it was important for each group to have storage for their equipment and the application for grant funding was towards the costs of providing this.

She concluded by inviting Members to drop in to Tiny Tots on a Tuesday morning

The Chairman thanked Mrs Frances for her presentation.

**50. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – ASHWELL VILLAGE TRUST**

The Communities Officer advised that no representatives of the Ashwell Village Trust had been able to attend this meeting.

**51. GRANT APPLICATIONS AND COMMUNITY UPDATE**

The Communities Officer presented the report of the Strategic Director of Finance, Policy and Governance entitled Grant Applications and Community Update and drew attention to the following:

Budgets

The current level of funding available in the 2016/17 budgets were:

Baldock Town - £3,996  
 Baldock East - £1,600  
 Arbury - £438  
 Weston and Sandon £1,200

The current level of funding available from the carried forward 2015/16 budgets were:

Baldock East £516  
 Weston and Sandon £1.169

Following the meeting the figures to carry forward, by ward, to the 2017/18 financial year would be:

Baldock Town - £2059  
 Baldock East - £1322  
 Arbury - £267  
 Weston & Sandon - £2353

The Communities Officer advised that he would be contacting Members to discuss how this money would be carried forward.

Baldock East Budget

Grant funding agreed at the meeting held on 5 December 2016 would require the following amounts to be transferred from the Baldock East Budget to the Baldock Base Budget:

- (i) £108 – Ashwell Music Festival Grant Funding;
- (ii) £48 – Small Acts of Kindness Grant funding.

Surgery Banner

The Communities Officer advised that a 9 foot banner for use at Community Surgeries could be purchased for £120.

Members were supportive of the concept, but were concerned that the wording on the banner did not restrict its use for any other event with Councillors present.

It was proposed and seconded that grant funding of £120 be awarded to purchase a banner for use at events where Councillors were present and that the Communities Officer be requested to liaise with all Members regarding the wording on the banner before ordering it.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the budgetary expenditure, balances and carry forwards from the Development and Visioning Budgets be noted;
- (2) That, in respect of grant funding awarded at the meeting held on 5 December 2016, the following amounts be transferred from the Baldock East Budget to the Baldock Base Budget:
  - (i) £108 – Ashwell Music Festival Grant Funding;
  - (ii) £48 – Small Acts of Kindness Grant funding.
- (3) That grant funding of £120 be awarded towards the cost of the purchase of a banner for use at Baldock and District Community Surgeries and other similar events;
- (4) That, subject to the agreement of Councillor Shanley, funding for (3) above be taken in proportionate shares from each budget;
- (5) That, in respect of (3) above, the Communities Officer be requested to liaise with all Members of this Committee regarding the wording on the banner prior to ordering it;
- (6) That the actions taken by the Community Development Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being for Baldock 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.

**52. GRANT APPLICATION – ROTARY CLUB OF BALDOCK**

Prior to the item being discussed Councillor Michael Muir declared a declarable interest as he was a member of the Rotary Club of Baldock. He advised that, as he would not personally benefit from any grant funding awarded, he would remain in the room and take part in the debate and vote.

The Communities Officer advised that funding had previously been awarded to the Rotary Club of Baldock in June 2016 which was before the new Grants Policy was adopted.

If Members were to award grant funding today then, under the new policy, the Rotary Club of Baldock would not be able to apply for further funding for any purpose for two years.

Members were supportive of awarding grant funding but there was some debate about the amount. Some Members wanted to award the full amount requested whilst others commented that the amount requested was a lot of money and that the Committee had previously adopted a frugal approach to awarding grant funding that should be continued.

They also noted that the Round Table of Baldock gave out grants totalling half of their income and that this was slightly profligate.

It was proposed and seconded that grant funding of £1,500 be awarded.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That grant funding of £1,500 be awarded to the Rotary Club of Baldock towards the cost of maintenance of existing Christmas lights and the provision of additional new Christmas Lights;
- (2) That, subject to the agreement of Councillor Shanley, funding for (1) above be taken in proportionate shares from each budget.

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

**53. GRANT APPLICATION – BALDOCK TOWN TWINNING ASSOCIATION**

Prior to the item being discussed Councillor Jim McNally declared a declarable interest as he was the NHDC representative to the Baldock Town Twinning Association. He advised that this was not so significant as to prevent him from taking part in the debate and vote.

Prior to the item being discussed Councillor Michael Weeks declared a declarable interest as he was the NHDC representative to the Baldock Town Twinning Association. He advised that this was not so significant as to prevent him from taking part in the debate and vote.

Prior to the item being discussed Councillor Michael Muir declared declarable interest as he and his wife were members of the Baldock Town Twinning Association. He advised that this was not so significant as to prevent him from taking part in the debate and vote.

Members noted that this the second grant application from Baldock Town Twinning Association in one year but acknowledged that the two anniversary events were important milestones that should be supported.

It was proposed and seconded that grant funding of £1,000 be awarded and

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That grant funding of £1,000 be awarded to the Baldock Town Twinning Association towards the cost of Town Twinning visits to Baldock in 2017 and 2018;
- (2) That, subject to the agreement of Councillor Shanley, funding for (1) above be taken in proportionate shares from each budget.

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

**54. GRANT APPLICATION – BALDOCK METHODIST CHURCH**

Members noted the busy and varied programme of events provided at the Baldock Methodist Church, particularly those provided for the vulnerable. They also understood the need for storage for these groups.

It was proposed, seconded that grant funding of £180 be awarded and

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That grant funding of £180 be awarded to Baldock Methodist Church towards the cost of purchasing internal storage units for community use;
- (2) That, subject to the agreement of Councillor Shanley, funding for (1) above be taken in proportionate shares from Baldock Town and Baldock East budgets.

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

**55. GRANT APPLICATION – ASHWELL VILLAGE TRUST**

The Communities Officer informed Members that the original application from Ashwell Village Trust had been for £100, but, as the grant policy stated a minimum sum, this had been increased to £150 to support 2 years of well dressing events.

Members noted that there had not been a presentation made regarding this application and that this had been agreed by the Chairman as an exception.

It was proposed, seconded and

**RESOLVED:** That grant funding of £150 be awarded to Ashwell Village Trust from the 2016/17 Arbury Budget towards the cost of the Ashwell Well Dressing Project.

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

**56. SECTION 106 AND UNILATERAL UNDERTAKINGS**

The Development and Conservation Manager presented the report entitled Section 106 and Unilateral Undertakings.

He advised Members that there were two corrections to the report being that:

1. Due to a drafting error, Paragraphs 8.4.5, 8.4.6 and 8.4.7 should be deleted from the report.
2. The Paragraph numbers referred to in Paragraph 8 should be amended to Paragraphs 2.2 and 2.3.

The Development and Conservation Manager advised that the tables appended to the report only included money received and did not list anticipated receipts as there could be no guarantee they would ever be received.

The nature of Section 106 funding had changed over recent years and continued to do so.

The tariff approach whereby we could collect monies from small scale developments and spend it cumulatively on projects that fell within a general category was over. This was largely as a result of the pooling limit imposed on Section 106 funds from April 2015 and the banning of Section 106 funding for schemes of 10 dwellings or less.

Most, if not all, of the money collected over the coming years from Section 106 funding would already have a specific project already identified within the associated planning obligation resulting in the discretionary element diminishing over the next few years.

The successful system of allocating available funds to relevant projects to where those funds remained available and updating Area Committee's on an annual basis would be continued.

He drew attention to Paragraph 8.1.3 of the report and advised that the government had confirmed that a review of the Community Infrastructure Levy would be announced in Autumn 2017.

It appeared that this was likely to allow Local Authorities to set standard and very low Community Infrastructure Levy tariffs without the need to go through a Local Plan examination process and then rely on the existing Section 106 system on top of that, although there is no certainty of this.

Future Community Infrastructure Levy governance and spending would require an entirely new decision making process as to how money was allocated.

Members asked whether there had been any challenges from developers to Section 106 spending.

The Development and Conservation Manager advised that some developers had been very accommodating about the change of use of Section 106 funding and that the only challenges had been during the bill chasing process when they haven't paid and claim that there was no project to spend it on. In these cases developers are reminded that their development could last for 100 years and the needs of the residents would continue during that time. Nationally there was a large amount of Section 106 money held by Councils.



Members asked for clarification regarding the use of the Community Infrastructure Levy.

The Development and Conservation Manager explained that NHDC was in the early stages of introducing a Community Infrastructure Levy and that current it was thought that £120 per square metre was a viable level, but this would have to be examined and therefore it was likely to be set at a lower level, although this was not certain and new governance arrangements would have to be setup.

The problem with the Community Infrastructure Levy was that the development would be completed before any money was received by the council resulting in a time gap between introduction and collection.

Any Community Infrastructure Levy would be mandatory whereas Section 106 funding is negotiable.

In response to questions the Development and Conservation Manager confirmed that the information contained in Appendix 1 was the income already received under Section 106 and Unilateral Undertakings.

He met with the Communities Team on a regular basis to identify ever more creative ways in which to spend the monies, particularly in villages where the amounts could be quite small.

It was ever more important that towns and parishes recognised that the emphasis had shifted so that projects had to be identified in order to receive funding

Members acknowledged that Parishes needed to identify potential projects, even if they were against a particular development, as if that development was granted planning permission, this was the only way they would receive any Section 106 funding.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the Development and Conservation Manager and his team be thanked for the work undertaken regarding Section 106 and Unilateral Undertakings;
- (2) That the contents of the report titled Section 106 and Unilateral Undertakings be noted;
- (3) That the Development and Conservation Manager be requested to present a report regarding Section 106 and Unilateral Undertakings to this Committee on an annual basis;
- (4) That, other than where a contribution has been negotiated for a specific purpose or project, Ward Members of the area where Section 106 or Unilateral Undertaking funding is generated and the Area Committee be consulted prior to funding being allocated away from that area or from a village location to a town.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To ensure that there is a robust system for negotiating and managing Section 106 and Unilateral Undertakings.

**57. WARD AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS – MEMBERS’ REPORTS**

No Ward or Outside Organisation matters were discussed.

The meeting closed at 8.56 p.m.

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Chairman