

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

BALDOCK AND DISTRICT COMMITTEE

**MEETING HELD IN THE BALDOCK COMMUNITY CENTRE,
SIMPSON DRIVE, BALDOCK
ON MONDAY, 3RD DECEMBER, 2018 AT 7.30 PM**

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors Janine Paterson (Chairman), Valentine Shanley (Vice-Chairman), Steve Jarvis, Jim McNally, Michael Muir and Michael Weeks*

In Attendance: *Ashley Hawkins (Communities Officer) and Amelia McNally (Committee and Member Services Officer)*

41 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – Start time of Item – 18 seconds

No apologies for absence were received from Councillors.

42 MINUTES - 3 SEPTEMBER 2018

Audio Recording – Start time of Item – 25 seconds

The minutes from the last meeting on 3rd September 2018 were unavailable for sign-off so this will be postponed until the next meeting in March.

43 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio Recording – Start time of Item – 36 seconds

There was no other business notified.

44 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio Recording – Start time of Item – 43 seconds

- (1) The Chairman welcomed those present at the meeting, especially Counsellor David Levett and to those who had attended to give a presentation on grant applications;
- (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. Members who were to declare a declarable interest and who wished to exercise a 'councillor speaking right', had to declare this at the same time as the interest.

45 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio Recording – Start time of Item – 1 minute 47 seconds

Richard Sell, Membership Secretary and Schools' Coordinator at Letchworth Rugby Club thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee regarding their grant application.

Richard Sell informed Members of the following:

- Letchworth Rugby Club was closer to Baldock town centre than Letchworth town centre and 50% of the members of Letchworth Rugby Club were from Baldock and the surrounding villages. Knights Templar was the closest secondary school.
- The grant application was to help grow the delivery of rugby coaching undertaken in Baldock schools. At Knights Templar a previous 3 year satellite grant of £2,000 was awarded by Sport England and was about to run out.
- Part 1 of the application request was for £500 to allow the club to deliver another 20 coaching sessions at Knights Templar in 2019.
- Primary schools grant of £300 required to offer discounted sessions to coach during PE lessons. Primary schools in Baldock keen to take up this offer.
- Children would benefit and this would promote active and healthy lifestyles.
- All children would be given the opportunity to learn to play rugby and staff would gain valuable knowledge and the confidence to teach the children how to play.
- Strong links would be built with the schools so that children could enjoy playing rugby both in and out of school.
- The Club would offer the schools 'rugby scholarships'. PE staff would identify suitable candidates and there would be guidelines for selection of talented children or from families whose circumstances meant that the membership fee would preclude them from participating. Scholarship would waive the first year's membership and then it would be £60 (half price) for subsequent years.

In response to questions from Members, Richard Sell advised that:

- The £1,100 for matched funding would be the cost of the membership fees which would be waived as part of the 'scholarship scheme'. In Baldock nine scholarships would be given to the schools. The club would also contribute towards the cost of the kit and on occasion would even provide some children with kit if that were the reason they were prevented from playing.
- Sport England reviewed their funding model and the satellite grants were no longer available.
- The grant money would allow services to be delivered at Knights Templar in 2019 up to February half term and then from September/October and also enable the PE lessons at primary schools to be provided.
- At the end of 2019, Knights Templar would need to source other grants. With the primary schools, given the incentives of discounted sessions they may be able to contribute to the PE lessons going forward or would be to seek further grants.
- The club was aware that it would not be able to approach the Baldock Area Committee again until 2020 and the funds requested were sufficient to last for two years.

The Chairman thanked Richard Sell for his presentation.

Audio Recording – Start time of Item – 13 minutes 20 seconds

Ed Hartley from 2nd Baldock Scouts thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the committee regarding their grant application.

- Scout movement 65 years in December.
- Grown by 40% in all three sections. Number of scouts grown from 14 to 30 this year due to change of days and increase in activities.
- Won County Orienteering Competition.
- Restricted by lack of equipment and what was offered in terms of camping.
- Shortage of tents, so fewer scouts were able to go camping at any one time. Were having to borrow tents but difficult with larger camps.
- Camping as a patrol to allow scouts to gain confidence and various skills required was inhibited by lack of equipment. Scouts would be able run their own sessions if more stoves, tents, etc were available.
- Cost to fund new patrol would be £2,000 and taking into consideration tents, shelters and equipment, the grant application would be £1,800 approximately. Money was raised at Octoberfest – scouts cleaned and set up for Baldock Charity Beer Festival.
- Grant required for more tents and equipment - £600 requested but seeking £1,500 in total which they were trying to raise through fundraising.
- Fundraising subsidised scouts and supported disadvantaged children in the area.

In response to questions from Members, Ed Hartley advised that:

- Raising funds ready for 2019 camping season would be difficult as it started January 2019. Fewer scouts interested in camping over winter. Various fundraising events.
- Funds of £6,252 held. Financial year ended in December. Membership fees ($\frac{2}{3}$ of funds) paid in January. The remaining funds were reserved for trailer and also fundraised for contained purchased in 2018.
- Age range 10½ to 14.
- Scout numbers: 26 – Baldock
 - 1 – Ashwell
 - 2 – Weston
 - 1 – LetchworthSimilar numbers in beavers and cubs
- Volunteers – 3 leaders in Scout section, Cubs – 2, Beavers 1
- Committee made up of parents but trying to increase numbers
- Special needs/disabled capabilities were available. No disabled children were present at the time of this meeting but some had ADHD/autism.

The Chairman thanked Ed Hartley for his presentation.

Audio Recording – Start time of Item – 23 minutes 25 seconds

Richard Winter from Baldock Allotment & Leisure Gardeners Association thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the committee regarding their grant application.

- The Association wanted to encourage more individuals to be green fingered.
- More notice boards required as the present ones did not cover the top of the fences which had been refurbished and were in a poor state of repair.
- £2,250 needed to replace four notice boards and updates on older boards.
- 281 members, 10 vacant allotment sites unlike other areas which have waiting lists. This is due to lack of publicity. Different initiatives tried to encourage new people.
- Money in the pot reserved for replacement of leaky asbestos roof.

In response to questions from Members, Richard Winter advised that:

- At the request of Councillor Michael Muir, Richard Winter agreed that he would email Andrew Mills/David Charlton and the other Councillors to notify them of the problem with the asbestos roof as this was a council issue.
- The Committee were advised that NHDC had intimated that they had another Client to take over the building but that would raise the question as to where they would move. Feedback was awaited from Stuart Izzard with his discussions within the Council as to what the outcome was and Richard Winter would email him.
- Four, lockable notice boards were required with aluminium posts and a wooden board with double-sided Perspex cover. It was planned that there would be a notice board located at each gate on Clothall Common and 1 on North Road. Quotations calculated online.
- Councillor Weeks queried whether Andrew Mills might know of anyone who could supply these and whether Council's purchasing account could be used. Richard Walker asked whether there might be a possibility, if this were the case, of being refunded some of their money. Richard Winter was trying to build up a contingency fund of £5000 in the event of an emergency e.g. water leak as monies were needed for replacing rotting fence posts.
- Fundraising quiz on 9th March 2019.

The Chairman thanked Richard Winter for his presentation.

46 LOCAL PLAN UPDATE

Audio Recording – Start time of Item – 33 minutes 50 seconds

Councillor David Levett thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee regarding the Local Plan Update.

- Councillor David Levett informed Members that the Inspector had issued his main modification recently so the update regarding what had happened so far with the local plan, the current status and future plan:

Background:

- 'Preferred Options' document approved for consultation on 24/11/2014 which ran from 18/12/2014 – 05/02/2015;
- 8,382 responses – 15,500 individual comments from those responses;
- There were major revisions and a submission version was approved for consultation on 11/04/2017. The consultation period ran from 19/10/2016 – 30/11/2016. There were 2,459 responses and 5,675 individual representations;
- Public Hearing with an Inspector in Letchworth. Originally scheduled for 8 days however there were 28 days of hearings in total which ran between November 2017 to March 2018;
- There were 400 representations and included input from the public, councillors and MP's, developer's landowners, neighbouring authorities, health, education, transport, environmental authorities, various pressure groups, parish and town councils and public bodies;
- During the Hearing additional work and background information was requested by the Inspector and extra work was volunteered to give extra substance and explain things in more clarity. This was submitted in June 2018. Updates followed as there were two legislative changes and information in local plans, particularly regarding environmental assessment that meant extra work was required;
- Inspector requested further clarification following these which were submitted in November 2018;

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- Inspector's main modifications and supporting documents were published on 19th November 2018;
- Special Cabinet meeting scheduled for 10th December 2018 at 3pm which was to grant approval for consultation on the following:
 - Inspector's proposed main modifications to the plan;
 - A sustainability appraisal which looked at those modification in context and made sure that the plan was still viable;
 - There were some additional documents which were submitted to the Inspector as requested by him;
 - All these documents were located on the main council website under local plan;
 - The consultation, assuming approved by Cabinet was on 10th December 2018, ran for six weeks from 3rd January 2019 to 14th February 2019. Due to the volume of the documentation, plenty of time was given for everyone to go through it prior to the full consultation process;

What had not changed:

- Fundamentally the same plan was approved for submission by full Council in April 2017. There were no changes to the housing requirement had not changed. The identified need still needed to be met in full. A reasonable contribution needed to fulfil Luton's unmet housing needs and Stevenage's employment needs;
- The land marked as greenbelt release, was to be released from the greenbelt. A large area however was designated around Offley and Whitwell between Hitchin and Luton which stopped the encroachment into North Herts as new greenbelt. This was being pushed to be included as it was extremely rare to put new greenbelt in. The Inspector accepted that and included extra greenbelt. The result was that there was 9% more greenbelt than before;
- The land allocations, with the exception of one site in Royston where development had started in the intervening period, revealed that no allocations were deleted nor any new sites added. The new development should have made provision for the required infrastructure and that was an accumulative view. All the development, when looked at planning applications, should have taken into account the cumulative view of any development within the local plan;
- Provision of up to 40% affordable housing on new developments remain. The amount would depend on the size of the development and there was a large proportion earmarked as affordable, rented accommodation which also remains.

The Main Modifications:

- 400 modifications were identified, ranging from insertion of a single to the introduction of new or replacement policies. Each of the 106 sites had become a policy site which meant that policies had to be met before development could be approved;
- The main modifications were submitted to a sustainability appraisal and sustainability appraisal was one of those documents for consultation;
- A tracked change version of the submission version was available on the website which made it easier to follow all the changes;

Key Changes:

- Barkway, Knebworth, Codicote, Little Wymondley and Ickleford were originally classified as Category A villages. The Inspector said that they were more developed than most of the others, so they were identified as villages “identified for growth”. A clear explanation of how future retail needs were to be met by distributing a new floor space across the district. The Inspector wanted to know how this would be allocated on a town by town basis. This had been attempted however was very difficult with the current retail situation and they were trying to be as realistic as possible;
- The local transport plan – LTP4 was incorporated within the local plan and the plan focused on ‘modul shift’ getting on your bikes using public transport more had been incorporated into the local plan and on the individual site locations as well. There was additional criteria information to propose site allocations which had to be met by any new development. Concise information was required from the developers and they would need to specify the size and whether something should be retained or not. All the allocations were now to become policies instead of advisory guidance which would be very important when making planning decisions;
- Extensive changes were made to the Development Management Policies of the plan and needed to be sufficiently robust to achieve the intended results;
- Additional policy guidance had been provided and the plan would be implemented and monitored so there would be a more detailed action plan;
- Letchworth Garden City design principles were not in the plan mainly because they were not exactly conforming to the NPPF which was the National Planning Policy Framework. However the Inspector requested that these be put in;
- Full allocation of land to Danesbury Park Road in the south of the district to meet future needs of gypsy and traveller accommodation. One site was already present. Planning application and appeal was in process throughout the hearings and site was therefore now included as part of the local plan.

Where do we go from here:

- 10th December 2018 – Cabinet approved consultation. This was a straightforward decision with no debate;
- Consultation ran from 3rd January 2019 – 14th February 2019. All responses were to be collated and then sent to the Inspector. Nothing was done, it was only collated to be tied in with various modifications. The Inspector reviewed the representations and he said that “he would not consider unrelated or new representations”. He was asking purely on the main points and additional documents;
- Inspector then prepared a final report of recommendations taking into consideration anything that has come in as a consultation and once this final report was issued, full Council is asked to adopt as recommended. Full Council could not change that final version. It could only be accepted or rejected. Once adopted this would have to be adhered to.

In response to questions from Members, Councillor David Levett advised that:

- The Inspector’s advised that his priority list was tight with two more enquiries to carry out in early 2019. He would like to progress matters but would not issue the report until he was fully satisfied with the recommendations and made any future changes.

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- If all were to work out, we would hope to be able to adopt it in very late March or the middle of April however this would not be guaranteed.
- Councillor Levett, the leader of the Council, Linda Needham, two local MP's Bim Afalami, Oliver Heald and our Chief Executive and Planning Officer met with the Minister, James Brokenshire a few weeks' ago so and expressed their concerns about the length of time this had taken.
- With regard the issue of revised ONS numbers, there was no revision. The Inspector stated in his letter that he would not consider anything outside the modifications on the submission version consultation however, he did look at everything. If it does not specify on there, put representation in, as all representations would be sent in even if they were not pertinent.
- Any challenge to Inspector's report is the decision of the Inspector so in the case of whether the route into Weston is adequate, despite there being a circuitous route, you would need to raise this with him directly.

The Chairman thanked Councillor David Levett for his presentation.

47 BALDOCK, BYGRAVE AND CLOTHALL COMMON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN UPDATE

Audio Recording – Start time of Item – 55 minutes 23 seconds

Michael Bingham thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee regarding Baldock, Bygrave and Clothall Common Neighbourhood Plan Update.

Michael Bingham informed Members of the following:

- Neighbourhood Plan was produced for Baldock, Bygrave and Clothall Common including all the parish by roads, Clothall and the town of Baldock;
- People were unhappy with the scale of development being proposed for Baldock in the Local Plan due to significant issues, particularly with the highway aspects of site BA1, which had not been fully resolved. The Neighbourhood Plan was about trying to get the best out of whatever does happen as a result of the Local Plan. It was all about securing a better future and more specifically to add what was in the Local Plan in terms of the facilities provided, ensuring that the character of the area was safeguarded and that new development was of a high quality;
- The Local Plan was a large document containing many policies however after great consideration, there were areas where additional safeguards could be added which was the intention of the Neighbourhood Plan;
- There were lots of steps needed to prepare the Neighbourhood Plan and they were half way through the process so there was initial engagement with the community, a lot of research, reviewing of the background documents, production of the Local Plan, other relevant technical documents including those produced for Hertfordshire County Council who were promoting the major developments around Baldock;
- Knights Templar School did a project which was now a regular feature for year 8 and most students were thinking about the future and how they envisaged it. There were concerns about environmental quality and sustainability of new developments;
- The draft plan was nearing completion and modifications to the Local Plan were being finalised. Endeavours were being made to align the Neighbourhood Plan with Local Plan as far as is possible;
- There was no requirement to abide by every word in the Local Plan and the Neighbourhood Plan had to conform to the strategic policies of the Local Plan but it could depart from it if there was a justified reason;
- The Neighbourhood Plan would be consulted upon in 2019 which would then go to an examination which may or may not go to hearing;

- Neighbourhood Plan would be subject to public referendum and if it were to pass this, it would then need to go to Statutory Development Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan when finalised would carry just as much weight as the Local Plan by law in making planning decisions;
- There were three main blocks of policies, only 15 in total. Some of which were general that added to the Local Plan and applied to the area as a whole; particularly extra material on heritage and on green space had been added. There were then policies for specific sites in the Local Plan so this was where we added to the details or the stipulations in the Local Plan and added extra safeguards e.g. BA1 – proposed development to the north of Baldock some additional safeguards regarding not needed to be retained, existing features of the site, importance of the gap between Baldock and Bygrave etc;
- There were some specific policies for Baldock, Bygrave and Clothall. To maintain the character of those villages and what that meant for new development;
- The question arose of whether supplementary policies needed to reflect wider ambitions of the community but would not be part of the statutory part of the plan – this was something under consideration at the moment;
- Acorn Consultancy were appointed by the Government to work with us under a Neighbourhood Planning support programme of the Government grants. They came up with some design guidelines which would be part of the Neighbourhood Plan and set out some broad design parameters for future development covered by the area covered by the Neighbourhood Plan. Unlike the Neighbourhood Plan, it was split into two parts, general principles which applied to the whole area and some were more specific which applied to the allocations within the Local Plan. Both major urban extension sites plus the two regeneration sites within the town at Deans Yard and Icknield Way – ideas how those sites could be developed.

Main modifications to Local Plan:

- Area to the east and north east of Clothall Common between sites BA4 and BA3, was not allocated for development in the Local Plan in the submission draft as it was sensible to keep that as open space;
- It rose steeply and was unstable from a building point of view with material deposited there following Baldock bypass;
- Used as a recreation area and the survey revealed this area was highly valued;
- Hertfordshire County Council had been lobbying to build on part of that site – building outwards to the eastern edge of Clothall Common despite the District Council proposing they would not allocate it;
- Proposed modifications coloured in all the area as potential housing land;
- Inspector came up with these notifications through the process of dialogue with council officers. It was unclear as to why this had been done and no sound reason had been given. This did increase the risk that building would take place on the slope, east of Clothall Common and eat into the important recreation area;
- BA4 and BA3 policies did not include any additional written mitigation to limit that risk. There was nothing that said that building should not take place to the east of the edge of Clothall Common;
- People should be made aware that the Neighbourhood Plan could override this. The allocations were not strategic so it could be considered as allocated open space by ourselves or adding in some mitigation of our written policies but it would be much better if the Local Plan were to address the issue. The inspector would need to consider this issue when all of the objections are available.

In response to questions from Members, Michael Bingham advised that:

- It was unlikely that there was not enough money for the consultation with the residents of Baldock by growth of Clothall. Eligible to apply for funding from the Government. Technical support so far which funded the work by Acorn. Considered making a bid to the Government's funding pot for funding for the consultation process. Other avenues would need to be considered if this was not successful. Councillor Muir did not know whether this was allowable by the Baldock committee and they would need to take advice in this regard however he said you could apply for the County Council budget and Michael would be willing to give some money to it if needed;
- They would like to consult on the draft Neighbourhood Plan as soon as possible. Plan almost written, design principle almost written. Currently making further changes needed to satisfy the modifications. Discussions needed with County Highways and was due to see then in January to discuss transport policies. Discussions were taking place with statutory agencies to ensure they were happy with the policies. Consultation would take place once all these changed had been done. Date of consultation would depend on funding issue – undecided on whether before or after 1st April 2019 as the Government funding relates to the financial year;
- With regard to the saving of a particular area of land you would need to respond to the consultation on the proposed modification which is the one that was due to start on 3rd January 2019 i.e. the Local Plan consultation.
- It was felt that the use of photographs in the presentation clarified the area of concern.

The Chairman thanked Michael Bingham for his presentation.

48 BALDOCK COMMUNITY EVENTS

Audio Recording – Start time of item – 1 hour 10 minutes and 22 seconds

Baldock Christmas Fair – 1st December 2018

Christmas Fair held last Saturday was a great success despite the weather. Consistent attendance throughout although this was a little sparse whilst raining. High Street crowded for light switch on and excellent local music bands appearing from the afternoon onwards. The bands did not charge for their time. Funds were not available to pay the bands! Great community spirit. 1,500 – 2,000 people thought to have attended. Grateful thanks sent to all the teams setting everything up and cleared things away at the end, especially Counsellor Val Shanley who worked like a Trojan from 7am! Without his Land Rover and stalwart work they would not have achieved as much as they did.

The tree looked fantastic when lit up last year. NHDC had been let down by their Surrey supplier whose trees came from Germany; so they needed to look at local suppliers who were accountable to the community.

Grateful thanks to Stuart Matthews and the Festival Committee for all the hard work they did with the Rotary Club to provide, set and organise the augmentation of the lights on the Christmas tree. The first phase of the lights were provided by the Council however Stuart made a fantastic difference.

Lights were improving on an annual basis. In April permissions would be obtained from the shops to install all the wiring in preparation for the lighting at the end of 2019.

Christmas Carols – 18th December

Carols would be held around the Christmas tree at 7pm.

Baldock Beast - February

7th Event. Bookings were already being taken and they hoped to exceed 500 entries in 2019.

Spring/Summer Dinner Dance

Consideration was being given to a dinner dance / spring ball from the Old Town Hall in April/May. The Arts & Heritage Centre Group had been approached and they were in favour of it. It would not be a big affair. It was undecided on the theme - black tie/Hawaiian evening.

49 GRANTS & COMMUNITY UPDATE

Audio Recording – Start time of item – 1 hour, 25 minutes and 53 seconds

RESOLVED:

- (1) That grant funding of £800 be awarded to Letchworth Rugby Club to help grow the delivery of rugby coaching undertaken in Baldock schools. This would be split between Baldock Town and Baldock East as follows:

Baldock Town:	£416 (52%) to be taken from 2018/2019 base budget
Weston/Sandon:	£112 (14%) to be taken from 2018/2019 base budget
Baldock East:	£128 (16%) to be taken from 2017/2018 base budget
Arbury:	£144 (18%) to be taken from 2017/2018 base budget

- (2) That grant funding of £600 be awarded to 2nd Baldock Scouts To purchase more tents and equipment. This would be split between Baldock Town and Baldock East as follows:

Baldock Town:	£410 (76%) to be taken from 2018/2019 base budget
Weston/Sandon:	£40 to be taken from 2018/2019 base budget
Baldock East:	£130 (24%) to be taken from 2017/2018 base budget
Arbury:	£20 to be taken from 2017/2018 base budget

- (3) That grant funding of £2,000 be awarded to Baldock Allotment & Leisure Gardeners Association for the purchase of 4 new notice boards. This would be split between Baldock Town and Baldock East as follows:

Baldock Town:	£300 (24%) to be taken from 2018/2019 budget
Baldock East:	£950 (76%) to be taken from 2017/2018 carry forward budget and the remainder from 2018/19 base budget

REASON FOR DECISION: To improve the services provided in Baldock and the surrounding District.

50 WARD MATTERS AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS - MEMBERS' REPORTS

Audio Recording – Start time of Item – 1 hours, 39 minutes, 30 seconds

Highways

Councillor Muir advised that in the last 5-6 years every road which had been resurfaced had been paid £90,000 with the exception of one. In 2019, money was allocated to Simpson Drive and all around the back of Thurle Close. All the parking and laybys outside the garages opposite Baker's Field were all Highway's land and the state of the roads there were terrible.

Also to come out of next year's budget would be various pavements around the town and a zebra crossing in South Road.

The meeting closed at 9.15 pm