

**NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**SOUTHERN RURAL COMMITTEE**

**MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNCIL OFFICES,  
GERNON ROAD, LETCHWOTH GARDEN CITY  
ON THURSDAY, 10TH OCTOBER, 2019 AT 7.30 PM**

**MINUTES**

**Present:** *Councillors Claire Strong (Chairman), Faye S Frost (Vice-Chairman), David Barnard, George Davies, Ian Moody, Lisa Nash and Sam North*

**In Attendance:** *Simon Ellis (Development and Conservation Manager), Melanie Stimpson (Democratic Services Manager), Julie Williams (Electoral Service Manager), Claire Morgan (Community Engagement Team Leader), Lea Ellis (Assistant Community Engagement Officer), Hilary Dineen (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager) and Matthew Hepburn (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer)*

**Also Present:** *At the commencement of the meeting approximately 8 members of the public, including registered speakers.*

**4 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

*Audio recording – 17 seconds*

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors John Bishop and Terry Tyler.

**5 MINUTES - 7 MARCH 2019**

*Audio Recording – 1 minute*

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 7 March 2019 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

**6 MINUTES - 21 MAY 2019**

*Audio Recording – 1 minute 25 seconds*

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 21 May 2019 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

**7 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS**

*Audio recording – 1 minute 43 seconds*

There was no other business notified.

**8 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

*Audio recording – 1 minute 49 seconds*

(1) The Chairman welcomed those present; particularly speakers at Public Participation;

- (2) The Chairman introduced and welcomed Matthew Hepburn a new Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer who would be clerking future meetings of that Committee;
- (3) In accordance with Council policy this meeting was being audio recorded. Members of the public and the press may use their devices to film/photograph, or do a sound recording of the meeting;
- (4) Members were reminded that any declarations of interest in respect of any business set out in the agenda, should be declared as either a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or Declarable Interest and were required to notify the Chairman of the nature of any interest declared at the commencement of the relevant item on the agenda.

## **9 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - OFFLEY VILLAGE HALL**

Audio Recording – 3 minutes 34 seconds

Mr Lawrence Cowley, Offley Village Hall, gave a verbal presentation in relation to their Grant Application, as follows:

- Last year, Offley Village Hall decided to have a Christmas Tree in the village which they wanted to repeat this year;
- The Christmas Tree was appreciated by residents and passers-by;
- The tree would be in a prominent location in the village;
- Last year, the tree was lit for two weeks before the official Christmas Light switch on. There was also a Carol Service in the Village Hall which approximately 30 to 40 people attended;
- A tree had been donated and the grant funding of £150 would pay for specialist switches, extension leads and the like;
- The previous grant had helped to pay for the tree, the lights and the food.

The Chairman thanked Mr Cowley for his presentation.

## **10 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - WYMONDLEY BAPTIST CHURCH**

Audio Recording – 8 minutes 53 seconds

Mr Craig Bacon, Wymondley Baptist Church, gave a verbal presentation in relation to their Grant Application, as follows:

- Wymondley Baptist Church had served the village and community since 1859;
- The sum requested was £1,500 towards converting the existing toilets to make them accessible to wheelchair users and those with mobility issues;
- Approximately 60 people used the hall regularly, many with mobility issues;
- Wymondley Baptist Church was used by a variety of people;
- A variety of events took place in the Church Hall;
- It was also used as a Polling Station;
- This project would provide a modern and safe facility;
- There was no other community hall in Wymondley;
- They had received a grant funding from another source of £1.500

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Claire Strong

In response to questions, Mr Bacon confirmed that:

- The £750 matched funding had been doubled to £1,500 by the Bernard Sunley Charitable Foundation.

The Chairman thanked Mr Bacon for his presentation.

## 11 GRANTS & COMMUNITY UPDATE

*Audio Recording – 14 minutes, 25 seconds*

The Community Engagement Team Leader presented the report entitled Grants and Community Update and drew attention to the following:

- There was £14,121 left in the budget;
- The total amount requested for grant funding was £1,889;
- If Members were minded to award all of the requested grant funding this would leave £12,232 to be spent at the remaining two meetings this financial year;
- The amount allocated to each Ward Member from the Discretionary Budget had reduced each year and was currently £280;
- It was recommended that the Ward budgets be absorbed into the discretionary budget.

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

- Councillor Sam North;
- Councillor Claire Strong;
- Councillor David Barnard.

In response to questions, the Chairman advised the following:

- That it was more logical to have one pot of funding;
- That other Area Committees did not have individual Ward Member Budgets.

The Community Engagement Team Leader advised that::

- The Ward Budgets for Councillor Spencer-Smith and Councillor Henry should have been removed from the 19/20 budget sheet as they were no longer District Councillors;
- The deadlines for grant applications were as follows:
  - October 25 2019 for the December Committee meeting;
  - February 26 2020 for the March Committee meeting.

### **RESOLVED:**

- (1) That Members discretionary budgets be included within the Base budget of £5,900 as outlined under item 10, Financial Implications;

- (2) That the Ward budgets for Councillor Henry and Councillor Spencer-Smith be removed from the Budget sheet for 2019/20;
- (3) That the actions taken by the Community Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being for the Southern Rural Area be endorsed.

**REASONS FOR DECISIONS:**

- (1) To ensure the Committee is kept informed of the work of the Community Engagement Team;
- (2) 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 the existing Grants policy as agreed by Cabinet in June 2016.

**12 GRANT APPLICATION - OFFLEY VILLAGE HALL**

*Audio recording – 23 minutes 4 seconds*

It was moved by Councillor Strong, seconded by Councillor Barnard and

**RESOLVED:** That grant funding of £389.00 be awarded Offley Village Hall towards the cost of the purchase and transport of a Christmas Tree and provision of a children's disco.

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

**13 GRANT APPLICATION - WYMONDLEY BAPTIST CHURCH**

*Audio recording – 23 minutes 39 seconds*

It was moved by Councillor Davies, seconded by Councillor Moody and

**RESOLVED:** That grant funding of £1,500 be awarded to Wymondley Baptist Church towards the cost of converting existing toilets so that they are accessible to wheelchair users and those with mobility issues.

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

**14 ANNUAL UPDATE ON S106 OBLIGATIONS FOR THE SOUTHERN RURAL COMMITTEE**

*Audio Recording – 30 minutes 43 seconds*

The Development and Conservation Manager presented the report entitled Annual Update on S106 Obligations for the Southern Rural Committee and drew attention to the following:

- Table 1A illustrated agreed s106 provisions;
- Table 2 illustrated payments that had been received during the financial year of 2018/19;
- Table 4 and paragraph 8.4.5 illustrated remaining funds to be allocated for Southern Rural Parishes;
- There were diminishing discretionary Section 196 funds available to spend;
- The Transport Officer was looking at ways for the Sustainable Contributions element of the discretionary funding could be used;
- There was now a requirement to identify a project for funding in a Section 106 agreement at the time the planning application was submitted;
- Cabinet would consider a draft Supplementary Planning Document on the business case for the introduction of a small sites Community Infrastructure Levy at their meeting in December 2019.

The following Member raised questions and took part in the debate:

- Councillor David Barnard.

In response to questions raised, the Development and Conservation Manager advised that:

- Parish Councils were asked to comment on planning applications
- Whether or not they were in favour of the development, Parish Councils needed to consider what projects they wanted to be included in the Section106 agreement.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the content of the report entitled Annual Update on s106 obligations for the Southern Rural Committee be noted;
- (2) That the Development and Conservation Manager be requested to present a report regarding Section 106 contributions to the Southern Rural Committee on an annual basis;
- (3) That S106 Monitoring and Planning Compliance Officer be requested to investigate the criteria for funding towards community projects;
- (4) 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 is generated and the Area Committee be consulted prior to funding being allocated away from that area.

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- (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.

## 15 REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES AND POLLING STATIONS

*Audio Recording – 39 minutes*

The Democratic Services Manager and the Electoral Services Manager presented the report entitled Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations and drew attention to the following:

- Ramps at Gravely Village Hall and New Fellowship Hall were not required. However, ramps would still need to be supplied at Kings Walden Village Hall and Wytch End;
- Four of the consultation responses related to the Southern Rural area. Three agreed with the current situation and one asked for an extension to the review consultation.

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

- Councillor Claire Strong.

In response to questions raised, the Electoral Services Manager advised that it was not election law for ballot papers to be brought out to someone who was not able to enter the polling station. However, it was considered good practice.

**RESOLVED:** That Polling Places, as illustrated in the Returning Officer's Proposals set out in Appendices A and C be designated.

**REASON FOR DECISIONS:** The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced a change to the timing of compulsory reviews of UK Parliamentary Polling Districts and Polling Places. The compulsory review must commence and conclude between 1 October 2018 and 31 January 2020 (inclusive).

## 16 WARD MATTERS AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS - MEMBERS' REPORTS

*Audio recording – 43 minutes, 25 seconds*

Members gave updates on the following Ward Matters and Outside Organisations:

### Knebworth Town Twinning Association

Councillor Lisa Nash advised that Knebworth Twinning Association had recently held their annual quiz, hosted a Youth Football Team from Châtelailon-Plage and on Saturday 12 October, there would be a Soup Share. They were also planning the open gardens event for next year.

### Knebworth Village Trust

Councillor Lisa Nash advised that the Knebworth Village Trust had received grant applications for the Christmas Light Switch on and the Bowls Club

The SOS Pub Group have named the Village Trust as the organisation to receive any funds remaining when the organisation closes down.

Hertfordshire Police and Crime Plan

Councillor Sam North advised that Hertfordshire's Police and Crime Plan for the next 5 years was open for public consultation and could be found on the Police and Crime Commissioner's Website.

**17 POSSIBLE AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

*Audio recording – 46 minutes 5 seconds*

The Chairman led a discussion on possible agenda items for future meetings.

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Claire Strong;
- Councillor Faye Frost;
- Councillor Sam North;
- Councillor David Barnard.

Items for Future Agendas

Members considered that:

- There had been little news on the progress of the Local Plan;
- A Local Plan Update to be provided at the meeting due to be held on 12 December 2019;
- Parish Councils and Community groups to be invited to attend an informal meeting before the Southern Rural Committee meeting due to be held on 26 March 2020 in order to raise any concerns with District Councillors;
- The meeting above would be held between 6.30pm and 7.30pm with the formal meeting of the Committee starting at 8.00pm.

Budgets available for Grant Funding

A Member expressed concern with the current £12,232 left in the budget and asked what the money could be used for.

The Chairman advised that the £12,232 left was considerably lower compared to previous years. However, they were reliant on community organisations coming forward to submit a grant application in order for the Committee to allocate grant funding. Members and Parish Councillors should be directing organisations seeking grant funding to the Community Engagement Team.

**RESOLVED:** That the following be discussed at future meeting of this Committee:

12 December 2019

- Local Plan Update.

26 March 2020

- Parish Councils to be invited to attend an informal meeting before the Southern Rural Committee commences in order to raise any concerns with District Councillors;
- The formal meeting of the Southern Rural Committee due to be held on 26 March 2020 to commence at 8.00pm.

**REASON FOR DECISIONS:** To enable the Southern Rural Committee to agree items to be included for discussion at future meetings.

The meeting closed at 8.32 pm

Chairman