

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

SOUTHERN RURAL COMMITTEE
(Cadwell, Chesfield, Codicote, Hitchwood, Offa & Hoo, Kimpton and Knebworth
Wards)

**Minutes of the meeting held at Ickleford Village Hall on Thursday, 13 December
2007 at 7.50 p.m.**

MINUTES

PRESENT: Councillor D.J. Barnard (Chairman), Tom Brindley (Vice-Chairman),
John Bishop, Tricia Gibbs and Mrs C.P.A. Strong..

IN ATTENDANCE: *Barrie Jones – Head of Financial Services*
Steve Geach – Parks and Countryside Development Manager
Garry Gover- Community Development Officer,
Nigel Schofield and Hilary Dineen– Committee Administrators

28. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Ickleford Village Hall Committee for providing the venue. The Chairman advised before the meeting started that a brief 20 minute summary of the Sustainable Community Strategy would be presented at 7.30pm by the Council's Policy Manager.

The Chairman welcomed those making a presentation to the Committee.

The Chairman confirmed that the next meeting of the Southern Rural Committee would be held on 20 February 2008 at the Council Offices, Gernon Road, Letchworth Garden City.

29. APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillors Alan Bardett, Lee Downie, Jane Gray, Sal Jarvis and David Miller.

30. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman confirmed that there would be no other items of business at this meeting.

31. MINUTES – 19 SEPTEMBER 2007

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2007 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

MINUTE 25 –DISABLED PARKING BAYS IN RURAL AREAS.

The Chairman read out the following update on Minute 25.

At the meeting of the Joint Member Panel held on 15 October 2007 the North Herts District Manager and the NHDC – Hertfordshire Highways Liaison officer were requested to undertake reviews of disabled parking policies currently used by other authorities in Hertfordshire – specifically Three Rivers District Council - and report back to the next meeting of the JMP to be held on 28 January 2008.

Therefore, it is anticipated that the Head of Planning & Building Control (NHDC – Hertfordshire Highways Liaison officer) should be able to present a report on this issue to the next meeting of the Southern Rural Committee to be held on 20 February 2008.

32. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Agenda Item 9 – Naming of new development at land adjacent to Station Hotel, Park Lane, Knebworth

Councillors: D. Barnard, T. Brindley, Tricia Gibbs and Mrs C.P.A Strong declared a personal interest in that they all knew Mr Wordsworth personally and were all members of the Conservative Party as was former District Councillor R. B. Wordsworth and confirmed that they would remain in the room for the duration of the item and reserved the right to speak and vote.

33. PRESENTATION OF A PETITION – NHDC WASTE AND RECYCLING SERVICE

There being no resident of Codicote at the meeting to formally present the petition the Chairman confirmed the receipt of a petition concerning the new waste and recycling service, and the Committee agreed that this document should be passed to the Portfolio Holder for Waste and Recycling.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the residents of Codicote be thanked for the petition;
- (2) That the receipt of a petition containing 196 valid signatures ' Register of protest at the fortnightly collection of household waste and that in the summer months vermin and flies would have detrimental affect on health. Other Councils have realised that it was a mistake and re-instated weekly collections. We would therefore like our weekly collections to continue' be confirmed;
- (3) That the Portfolio Holder for Waste and Recycling be requested to respond to the lead petitioner and address the concerns raised in the petition.

34. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT ISSUES IN ICKLEFORD

The representative from Ickleford Parish Council thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and advised that the Committee Administrator would pass on a descriptive folder to Members.

The main objective of the presentation was to seek the Committee's support for a vehicle activated sign (VAS) in Turnpike Lane, Ickleford which many villagers had highlighted in the Parish Plan. Thirty seven households in Turnpike Lane had expressed concern about the increased traffic, size and speed of vehicles past their houses. In Ickleford Village another 504 residents had also expressed concern about speeding and size of traffic in the village. The Committee noted that Turnpike Lane did not have a 7.5 tonne lorry ban and vehicles used Turnpike Lane to avoid Hitchin Town Centre and proceeded to industrial areas which greatly affected pedestrians to the Village School.

The representative confirmed that Hertfordshire Highways were currently conducting a traffic survey in Turnpike Lane but advice from the County Council had indicated that subject to the confirmation of the need for a VAS it would not be installed until 2009 - 2010 at the earliest and that as there had been very few serious accidents to date it was unlikely that the installation of a VAS could be brought forward. In addition to a VAS, residents in Ickleford also sought approval for pinch points, chicanes and speed tables or humps.

The Chairman thanked the speaker for an informative presentation and clear objectives to relieve traffic problems in Ickleford which in the main was speeding vehicles. The Committee agreed that the best way forward would be by referral to the North Hertfordshire Highways Joint Member Panel (next meeting 28 January 2008) with a request that the North Herts District Manager should make investigations as to the viability of a VAS in Turnpike Lane and if joint funding from the 2008 – 2009 Discretionary Budgets of the JMP and Southern Rural Area Committee could accelerate the provision of a VAS.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the representative of Ickleford Parish Council be thanked for the presentation;
- (2) That the proposal for a Vehicle Activated Sign in Turnpike Lane and other traffic calming measures in Ickleford had the unanimous support of the Committee.

RECOMMENDED TO THE NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE HIGHWAYS JOINT MEMBER PANEL

- (1) That the North Herts District Manager be requested to take note of the support of the Southern Rural Committee for a Vehicle Activated Sign in Turnpike Lane,
- (2) That the proposal for other traffic calming measures in Ickleford had the unanimous support of the Committee.
- (3) That the Hertfordshire Highways – North Herts District Manager be requested to undertake a review of the feasibility and cost estimate of traffic calming measures in Turnpike Lane and Arlesey Road Ickleford, with priority for a Vehicle Activated Sign in Turnpike Lane.

35. CHAMPION NEWS AND COMMUNITY REPORT

The Community Development Officer (CDO) provided a resume of his activities since the last meeting of the Southern Rural Committee held on 19 September 2007. Of particular note were the Festive and Winter play sessions to be held at Knebworth Pavilion, Breachwood Green Village Hall and New Fellowship Hall, Whitwell. The Committee noted that the NHDC Childrens Services Team were supporting a bid by Knebworth, Lilley, St. Ippolyts, Kings Walden and Offley Parish Council for a mobile play team to promote new rural play activities. The Committee also noted that the Rural Play Project had additional funding from the Hertfordshire Childrens Fund until September 2008 with the next tranche of funding to be sought from the NHDC Service and Financial Planning Process.

The CDO advised the Committee that six Parish Challenge, one Playground Challenge and 13 Parish Enhancement and Cleansing Fund applications had been received by the deadline of 30 September 2007. The Parish Challenge Panel would meet on 20 December 2007 to review all applications. The Committee were pleased to note the publicity arranged by the CDO e.g. SCooTS and that articles would be published in Outlook and sent to the local media.

The CDO confirmed that Holwell and Wymondley Parish Councils were in the early stages of producing a Parish Plan, a meeting on Youth Issues had been held in Knebworth on 26 September 2007 and that Codicote Parish Council opened its new Parish office on 4 December 2007.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the information provided by the Community Development Officer on activities since the last meeting of the Southern Rural Committee held on 19 September 2007 be noted.
- (2) That a vote of thanks be recorded in respect of the excellent and professional work undertaken by the Community Development Officer in support of Community Engagement in the Southern Rural Area.

REASON FOR DECISIONS:

To ensure that the Southern Rural Committee are kept informed of the work of the Community Development Officer.

36. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – GRANTS TO LOCAL VOLUNTARY GROUPS

The Community Development Officer advised the Committee that from 16 recipients who had confirmed that they would attend this meeting four groups had been requested to make a short presentation on the effectiveness of discretionary grants made by the Southern Rural Committee in 2006/07 & 2007/08.

1. Codifest, Codicote – a grant of £1,000 to support the first One Day Music Festival.

An oral presentation was given by one of the organisers of Codifest, who reported that the event was attended by approximately 2000 people of all ages, from as far away as Exmouth, Milton Keynes and Northampton. The

music was mainly blues, with younger bands performing. The event received financial support from Codicote Parish Council and Southern Rural Committee, unfortunately there was a deficit of £3000. This first event was well run, with no complaints received and the organisers would hope to hold the event annually in future. Councillors noted that feedback from the police & NHDC was very positive

2. Ickleford Parish Council – a grant of £1826 for bench and map board, new lawn mower, flower beds, IT software and website, repairs to Ickleford Play Area and Ickleford Parish Plan.

An oral presentation was given by the Chairman of Ickleford Parish Council who advised that grants received over two years had paid for a questionnaire delivered to all villagers and the results presented in a booklet. The Southern Rural Committee was thanked profusely for the following grants: £500 which paid for a new map board and seat, £447 for a new mower for the churchyard and £120 for development of a website, £117 paid for flower beds to refurbish the “triangle” by the Women’s Institute, which had been difficult to maintain in the past and now had a low maintenance “dry” arrangement. Other grants were: £110 for repairs of the children’s play area. £500 was awarded to St Katherine’s Parochial Church Council for maintenance of trees in St Katherine’s churchyard. The Committee were pleased to note that their financial support had assisted Ickleford in being awarded Village of the Year – West for the second consecutive year, as well as reaching the quarter finals of the National Village of the Year awards

3. St. Ippolyts Youth Club – a grant of £500 for equipment and materials.

The Treasurer of the Youth Club presented an oral report.

The Youth Club was established in 2005, with a set-up grant of £1000 from the Southern Rural Committee, to provide a safe place for young people to meet. Children of school years 8 to 10 used the Youth Club and between 15 and 50 children & young people attended the club each week. The club was based in the village hall on a Wednesday evening from 7.30pm to 9.00pm, events included, table tennis, pool, crafts, karaoke, and Christmas disco. The original grant paid for set up costs, insurance, materials and two periods of hall hire rent, with an additional grant of £500 for sports equipment. The Treasurer advised that the youth club would not exist if it were not for the grants and thanked the Committee for their support. Councillors noted that the Youth Club provided activities for children & the young people in St Ippolyts and thanked the organisers for this excellent community engagement.

4. Great Ashby Community Centre – a grant of £1045 for IT equipment, DVD Combo unit, sanitary bins and a display panel.

The Trustee and Secretary presented an oral report.

The management of the Community Centre has been transferred from NHDC to the Centre in March 2007 and received grants which supported the following: £500 for IT equipment, which has now been installed, £170 for a DVD player which was used by the Youth Club, £205 for six panel display boards, used by the Parent and Toddler group and for the first ever art show being held in 2008. £170 was also awarded to the centre to purchase hygiene equipment for toilets at the Centre. Councillors noted that it was difficult to create a community spirit within a new community, and the Centre provided an excellent community facility.

5. Knebworth Link up Club – a grant of £350 for entertainment, transport and hall hire costs.

An additional oral update report was allowed by the Committee from a member of the Link up Club.

Members were aged approximately 80 to 90 years, the grants were: £200 awarded for a coach trip to the River Lea Valley Park for the members, as well as a contribution towards hall hire costs. £150 was also awarded for a party to celebrate the 25th birthday party of the club. These events gave older people a reason to be involved in the community and look forward to social events they could do together, for involvement. The financial & grant-aid support given by the Committee & the Community Development Officer was fully endorsed by the club, as without this continued support, the events could not have been held.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the representatives of all the voluntary groups and organisations be thanked for their attendance at the meeting;
- (2) That the information provided in the presentations be noted;
- (3) That all local voluntary groups be thanked for their valuable contribution to the well being and development of the community;
- (4) That the Committee wished to place on record by way of a vote of thanks acknowledgement of the valuable support provided by the Community Development Officer to all local voluntary groups submitting grant applications to the Southern Rural Committee.

REASON FOR DECISIONS

To ensure the continued support of the Southern Rural Committee for local voluntary organisations.

37. ANNUAL GRANTS, DEVELOPMENT, DISCRETIONARY AND VISIONING BUDGET 2007-2008

The Committee considered the current expenditure and balance of the Annual Grants, Development, Discretionary and Visioning budget for 2007/08 as presented at Appendices 2 and 3 and the CDO advised that there would be four grant applications (Appendices A.1 to A.4) of which two would be supported by a presentation: Kimpton May Festival Committee and Great Ashby Community Centre Management Association. The Committee noted that two of the grants would need to be 'granted in principle' for expenditure in 2008-2009 and if the two other grants were awarded this would leave a total of £18,847 available for allocation before 31 March 2008.

The Chairman emphasised the need for all local voluntary groups to contact the Community Development Officer no later than 19 January 2008, in order that grant applications could be made to the next meeting of the Southern Rural Area Committee to be held on 20 February 2008. With this in mind the CDO was requested to set up a workshop on grant applications at a future SR Area Committee meeting for Members as soon as possible.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the information in the report be noted;
- (2) That the balance of £18,847 available for disbursement before 31 March 2008 be noted;
- (3) That the Community Development Officer be requested to make the necessary arrangements to hold a Member Workshop on grant applications as soon as possible.

REASON FOR DECISIONS

To continue the financial support of the Southern Rural Area Committee to local voluntary groups and community organisations, schemes and initiatives.

38. GRANT APPLICATION: KIMPTON 2008 MAY FESTIVAL

RESOLVED: That a grant of £1000 be awarded 'in principle' to the Kimpton May Festival Committee as a contribution towards the costs of staging the four day 2008 Kimpton May Festival. This would be paid from the 2008/2009 budget

39. GRANT APPLICATION: GREAT ASHBY FUN DAY 2008

RESOLVED: That a grant of £500 be awarded 'in principle' to the Great Ashby Community Centre Management Association as a contribution towards the running costs of the 2008 Great Ashby Fun Day. This would be paid from the 2008/2009 budget

40. **GRANT APPLICATION: OFFLEY PARISH COUNCIL – DOG WASTE BINS**
RESOLVED: That a grant of £384 be awarded to Offley Parish Council from the 2007-2008 Discretionary Grants Budget as a contribution towards the costs of purchase and installation of two additional dog waste bins, one at Tea Green and one by Cockernhoe Pond.

41. **GRANT APPLICATION: OFFLEY PRE –SCHOOL PLAY EQUIPMENT**
RESOLVED: That a grant of £365 be awarded to Offley Pre-School Group from the 2007-2008 Discretionary Grants Budget as a contribution towards the costs of outdoor play equipment (two bicycles).

42. **NAMING OF NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT – LAND ADJACENT TO STATION HOTEL. PARK LANE, KNEBWORTH**

The Chairman referred the Committee to the report prepared by the Head of Planning and Building Services and the recommendation at Paragraph which proposed that this new development should be named 'Lytton Place'.

Following a short debate, and taking into account the points raised by officers in the report concerning the protocol for the naming of the new residential development, the Committee considered the possibility of naming this development in honour of former District Councillor Robin Wordsworth in respect of his long and meritorious service to the residents of Knebworth and North Hertfordshire. The Chairman reminded the Committee that this proposal had been placed before them at a previous meeting.

The Chairman proposed and it was agreed by a majority that this new residential development at Station Approach, Knebworth should be named 'Wordsworth Court'.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the information in the report and the protocol for the naming of new residential development be noted;
- (2) That the Head of Planning and Building Services be requested to make the necessary arrangements to name the new residential development at Station Approach, Knebworth 'Wordsworth Court'.

REASON FOR DECISIONS

To acknowledge the services of District Councillors to their local community and North Hertfordshire.

43. **TREE STRATEGY**

The Parks and Countryside Development Manager (PCDM) presented the report of the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services and advised that Cabinet at its meeting held on 16 October 2007 (Minute 61 refers) had resolved in principle to adopt the Tree Strategy and that all Area Committees should be given the opportunity to comment on the Tree Strategy.

The PCDM clarified the seven main facets of the Tree Strategy:

1. Provide a basis to perpetuate the character of towns and other areas and provide for a continuity of the local treescape by establishing a tree population with a balanced age structure and diverse species mix;
2. Allow the identification, quantification and evaluation of the Council's trees resource;
3. Enable the preparation and execution of maintenance regimes and the prioritising and programming of a periodic maintenance or conservation works appropriate to the nature of each site. The Council's legal obligations would also be met more effectively as would resistance to claims for damage or negligence;
4. Improve the service to the general public. By increasing proactive maintenance and prudent replacement, trees would cause less danger, damage and nuisance thus reducing complaints, claims for damage and emergency situations;
5. Enable the true cost of maintaining the Council's tree stock in a responsible manner to be established and allow realistic annual estimates to be compiled. Initial costs could increase significantly, but in the longer term as the health and condition of the tree

stock improves, subsequent maintenance costs should reduce;

6. Make the general public aware of the strategy by appropriate publicity thereby projecting the Council as an environmentally responsible body. Generally encourage and educate people not only to appreciate trees but also understand the reasons and need for tree renewal;

7. Establish a more positive form of tree management which would allow both Council Members and its officers to deal with representations from the public, which may conflict with the views of others, in a firm, fair and more orderly manner.

The Committee noted that there were three main tree sectors: Highway Trees, Cemetery Trees and Village Trees, but at the moment this authority had limited information on the number, age and condition of trees under its control with work ordered when and as required. The PCDM advised that in the Southern Rural Area most of the trees would be located in villages and the cataloguing of trees would be done using a computerised database system 'Arbotrack' which would then provide a strategic approach to tree management and proactive tree management and a uniformity of service throughout North Hertfordshire.

The PCDM confirmed that although a lack of funding would continue he was hopeful that Herts County Council would provide a grant to cover the survey and remedial work. Young trees would receive the most attention if causing a genuine nuisance or the tree was in a dangerous condition, with landowners bearing responsibility and therefore outside the scope of the Tree Strategy. The PCDM advised the Committee that a two for one tree replacement policy could be adopted under a Section 106 agreement where trees had been felled during development. The PCDM also confirmed that new trees could be planted under NHDC Revenue, but not until the Tree Strategy had been agreed and that the new trees did not have to be replacement trees.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Tree Strategy as presented at Appendix A to the report be noted;
- (2) That the Southern Rural Committee expressed their unanimous support for the objectives detailed in the NHDC Tree Strategy;
- (3) That should any Member of the Southern Rural Committee have any additional comments to make based on their local Ward knowledge would they please convey their comments to the Parks and Countryside Development Manager as soon as possible;
- (4) That the Parks and Countryside Development Manager be requested to convey in his report to the next meeting of Cabinet to be held on 18 December 2007 the unanimous support of the Southern Rural Committee for the NHDC Tree Strategy and to include in the report any further comments and/or recommendations made by Members.

REASON FOR DECISIONS

To confirm the support of the Southern Rural Committee for the NHDC Tree Strategy and sustainable working practices which would meet customer expectations for the maintenance and development of trees under NHDC ownership and management.

44. SERVICE AND FINANCIAL PLANNING 2008-2013 – EFFICIENCIES AND INVESTMENTS: 2008-2009

The Head of Financial Services (HFS) presented the report of the Strategic Director of Finance and Regulatory Services. The HFS also confirmed that the Efficiency and Investment Items for 2008-2009 through to 2012-2013 were presented to Cabinet on 16 October 2007 (Minute 60 refers), forwarded to Member Workshops held on 30 October and 1 November and subsequently to each of the Area Committees.

The HFS advised the Committee that a minimum efficiency target for 2008-2009 of £651,000 was required and this target incorporated changes to the General fund and an allowance of £250,000 for investment proposals against a Council Tax increase set at 4.9 per cent. The Committee noted that the proposed increase to car parking charges SG32 with a projected income of £141,000 had been rejected by Cabinet. The HFS confirmed that he would report to Cabinet at its meeting to be held on 18

December 2007 any comments made by the Southern Rural Committee. With this assurance in mind the Chairman asked the Members present for any comments. It was agreed that comments had been raised previously at Member Workshops and the HFS confirmed that he was aware of such comments and observations.

RESOLVED: That the information provided on Efficiencies and Investments for 2008-2009 at Appendices A to E be noted;

REASON FOR DECISIONS

- (1) To ensure that Cabinet are aware of any concerns that the Southern Rural Committee may have on any Efficiencies and Investment Items proposed for the Service and Financial Planning Service;
- (2) To ensure that the base expenditure is adjusted downwards to narrow the gap between the 2008 – 2009 District Requirement figure and the service spending requirements.

The meeting closed at 9.37 p.m.

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Chairman