

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

LETCHWORTH AREA COMMITTEE

**Meeting held at Jackmans Community, Ivel Court, Letchworth Garden City
on 23 July at 7.30p.m.**

MINUTES

- PRESENT:** *Councillors: D. Levett (Chairman), M. Davey (Vice-Chairman), S. Bloxham, J. Booth, J.M. Cunningham, Gary Grindal, T.W. Hone, Lorna Kercher, Paul Marment, Elliot Needham, Mrs L.A. Needham and Michael Paterson*
- IN ATTENDANCE:** *Ashuk Ahmed (Community Development Officer), Patrick Candler (Head of Community Development and Cultural Services), Hilary Dineen (Committee & Member Services Officer).*
- ALSO PRESENT:** *12 Members of the public.*

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor D Kearns.

2. MINUTES – 4 JUNE 2008

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 4 June 2008 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendment

Minute 14

That the resolution should read as follows: "That the Committee reallocate £5080 from the Revenue Visioning 2007/08 Wilbury Youth Diversionary Project (balance currently £8830) to NHDC Leisure and Community Development to provide 24 football training sessions of 2 hours each for the benefit of young people in the Wilbury area of Letchworth Garden City.

Minute17

The Community Development Officer (CDO) was asked for an update on the progress of the Youth initiatives in Westbury. The CDO stated that he would liaise with Ward Councillors and the Chairman regarding proposals as soon as possible.

3. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was submitted for consideration by the Committee.

4. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (1) The Chairman welcomed all those present to the Letchworth Committee Meeting.
- (2) Members were reminded that any declarations of interest in respect of any business set out in the agenda, and the nature of the interest, should be declared as either a prejudicial or personal interest at the commencement of the relevant item on the agenda. Members declaring a prejudicial interest should leave the room and not seek to influence the decision during that particular item.
- (3) The Chairman advised those present that the next meeting of the Letchworth Area Committee will be held on 24 September 2008 at Westbury Junior School, West View, Letchworth Garden City.

Councillor Lorna Kercher declared a prejudicial interest regarding the Howard Garden Social and Daycare Centre grant application as she is Chair of the Centre. Councillor Kercher stated that she would listen to the presentations and make a short presentation, but would leave the room for the vote.

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – JACKMANS IMPROVEMENT GROUP

Mr Harman, Chairman of Jackmans Improvement Group (JIG), thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee. He advised that:

- he communicated regularly with NHDC and the Heritage Foundation;
- that NHDC had been very helpful with grants;
- that the Jackmans Youth Centre had been very successful although there had been difficulty in getting volunteers;
- that Youth Services had given a lot of input to the Youth Group in providing youth workers;
- that youth gang problems had decreased and programmes had been put in place for the summer school holiday period to prevent a resurgence;
- that the main reason for gangs was the lack of things for young people to do;
- that the Police Community Support Officers had confirmed a decline in incidents involving youths since the youth centre opened;
- that the Community Garden was an on going project with replacement plants, for those stolen, would be planted later in the year and an official launch would take place in due course;
- that the group would use the temporary building and fit in with the planned bingo evenings once the library building was demolished, although storage for equipment was a problem that had not yet been resolved.

RESOLVED: That Mr Harman be thanked for his presentation.

6. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – RHAPSODE

Rebecca Leek thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee. She gave a powerpoint presentation regarding how the grant allocated from this Committee on 19 March 2008 was utilised which included:

- that Rhapsode was a charity that runs educational arts events;
- that the grant funding was used to part fund workshops held at Whitehill and Pixmore schools;
- workshops were held on Saturdays with children from 7 schools attending;
- the in-school workshops included story telling, Greek style art, large scale painting, writing prayer tablets circle dancing and singing;
- the open workshops included storytelling, playing irregular rhythms on drums, circle dancing and singing;
- an art exhibition and production was held in which 7 schools took part, which included a new adaptation of Trojan Women with new music;
- that the aim of Rhapsode is to access children who do not receive music lessons at school;
- Rhapsode had received positive feed back and would wish to continue this scheme and are in discussions with teachers and governors to discuss this.
- Ms Leek thanked the Committee for the grant funding which had enabled these activities to take place, but advised that future activities would need more funding.

Members made suggestions regarding future advice and funding including: holding discussions with the Heritage Foundation and Letchworth Arts Centre.

RESOLVED: That Ms Leek be thanked for her presentation.

7. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - HOWARD GARDEN SOCIAL AND DAY CARE CENTRE

David Brightwell thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee. He gave a presentation which included:

- that the Centre provided facilities for people in North Herts, although membership was primarily people from Letchworth;
- the Centre was established in 1942 with a lunch service starting in 1960;

- the Centre had been extended 4 times, on the last occasion, in 2000, this was funded by lottery funding;
- membership had declined over the years due to services provided by other groups however membership last year was 190;
- the Centre was the only one offering lunch on every week day and it was estimated that 5000 lunches had been provided in the previous year;
- an Asian lunch club had been established and provided meals once a week;
- day care was provided and this had become more important as people got older;
- Community Nurses, EMI and other services visited the Centre;
- many other clubs used the facilities, which provided income;
- statutory health and safety equipment such as fire alarms had become more expensive to provide and maintain;
- vandalism was an ongoing issue;
- services provided by staff included a congenial atmosphere, support with form filling and communication with statutory bodies.

Lynn Stoker thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee. She informed the Committee that:

- membership was increasing along with increased activities;
- the profile of the Centre was being raised by use of advertising;
- issues regarding transport to the Centre prevented an increase in the number of regular attendants;
- an annual open day is held;
- running costs for the Centre are extremely high an example was given that Public Liability Insurance costs £2578 per year;
- the equipment in the Centre continually needs repair or replacement;
- the Centre would not be able to operate without the allocation of grant funding.

Councillor Lorna Kercher thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee. She advised the Committee that:

- she was the Chairman of the centre;
- 21500 people passed through the doors of the Centre every year;
- this was much more than a day care centre

Members asked questions regarding the level of vandalism and what steps had been taken to prevent it. Lynn Stoker informed the Committee that the Police had been advised when vandalism had occurred, that they had used anti vandal paint and installed spiked metal gates; that the existing CCTV camera system did not give a view of the building and installation near the building was an issue due to the height of the Centre.

RESOLVED: That Mr Brightwell, Ms Stoker and Councillor Kercher be thanked for their presentations.

8. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - LETCHWORTH AFRO CARIBBEAN HARMONY GROUP

Sandra Bovell, the Chairman of Letchworth African Caribbean Harmony Group gave an oral presentation. She advised the Committee that:

- the Group was founded in October 2007 with 15 members;
- membership had now increased to 67;
- various trips and activities had been organised including a BBQ;
- the Group met at the Howard Centre, which was a great venue, once a month on a Saturday;
- the members take turns cooking Caribbean food;
- Black History Month will be held in August which aimed to educate people about where Caribbean people came from and why they were now in Letchworth.
- Ms Bovell thanked the Committee for previous grant funding which had enabled these events to take place.

RESOLVED: That Ms Bovell be thanked for her presentation.

9. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - INSPECTOR JASON THORNE (HERTFORDSHIRE CONSTABULARY)

Inspector Thorne thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee. He gave a presentation updating the Committee on crime statistics and prevention in Letchworth Garden City which included:

- For the financial year 1/4/07 – 31/3/08 Letchworth achieved a 23.7% reduction in crime which was the second highest section/town in the county.

Crime statistics – 01/04/08 to 23/7/08

- All crime increased from 768 to 780 (+12 crimes) = +1.8%;
- Sanctioned detection rate for all crime in North Herts = 33.4%, up from 26.4%;
- Violent crime in North Herts down from 553 to 490 (-63 crimes) = -11.4%;
- Serious violent crime in North Herts down from 15 to 13 (-36 crimes) -13.3%;
- Robbery remains unchanged at 5 = 0%;
- Dwelling burglary down from 36 to 29 (-7 crimes) = -18.4%;
- Theft from Motor vehicle crime down from 81 to 81 = 0%;
- Theft of Motor Vehicle up from 12 to 16 (+4 crimes) = +33.3%;
- Criminal damage down from 181 to 172 (-9 crimes) = -5%;
- Theft from person has remained the same at 14 offences = 0%;
- Theft from shop has increased from 60 to 71 (+11 offences) = +18.3%.

Dwelling Burglary

- Distraction burglary has seen a reduction from 6 offences to 4 (33.3% reduction);
- arrest of two young males caught in the act of breaking into a house and linked to further offence on the same night – offenders from Leicestershire;
- recent arrest of an offender linked to burglary that is linked to North Herts crimes and was one of Beds top targets;
- work is ongoing to re-emphasise crime prevention messages through media, leaflet drops and Operation Saturnalia.

Robbery

- Robbery offences have stayed the same;
- offender with previous for robbery has again been arrested and remanded in custody for a further offence following prison release.

Vehicle Crime

- Operation Tarantula run in conjunction with NHDC and CPP been conducted around public car parks and street based locations completing crime reduction surveys;
- appear to have seen a reduction in theft from motor vehicles around public parking areas.

Operation Stall

- invoked to tackle theft from vehicles;
- resulted in the arrest of males for going equipped to steal;
- further arrests throughout the year;
- proactive arrest of offender for going equipped and with a history for vehicle crime;
- utilising media for crime prevention messages.

Operation Gelding

- targeting those who try to dispose of stolen metal at local scrap dealers;
- has been running for some time;
- includes those who steal catalytic converters.

Town Centre

- a noticeable increase in shoplifting;
- an increase in the town centre of known prominent offenders associated with drugs and acquisitive crime;
- Visible patrols have been increased with robust targeting of known offenders;
- Work with licensed premises where offenders meet;
- Work with Turning Point to address offenders attending the centre;
- Visibility day in town centre with CPP and PCSO;
- Arrests of offenders for shoplifting with a view to restricting their future activities through bail conditions and ASBOs;

- Additional PCSO employed to patrol the town centre who is developing the shopwatch scheme with a view to incorporating town centre pubs.

Op Saltbush

- conducted at the Pelican public house to address drug use and supply;
- 15 people arrested for various drug related offences ranging from possession to supply;
- Since the operation have received no intelligence of drug related activity;
- close monitoring by licencing sergeant of subsequent activities and landlords;
- to address any dispersal an Operation has been repeated within the town centre involving the use of a drugs dog visiting licensed premises;
- Drug trafficking has seen a 20% reduction (5 offences to 4);
- possession has seen an 80% increase (20 offences to 36).

Disorder and Anti-Social Behaviour

Bursland

- a particular problem with youths gathering and conflict between certain groups;
- the installation of CCTV and increased patrols has seen a significant improvement;
- positive feedback from local residents following leaflet drop seeking feedback and local surgeries.

Town Centre

- Anti Social Behaviour in and around the town centre has improved, particularly around the multi storey car park;
- Improvement achieved by installation of CCTV, targeted patrols and crime prevention events with NHDC and CPP.

Jackmans Estate and Industrial estate

- The estate has seen continuing improvement;
- improvement achieved by targeted use of Antisocial Behaviour Contracts (ABC), Anti Social Behaviour Orders (ASBO) and robust enforcement;
- male arrested for breach of ASBO;
- PCSO continues close work with local community to seek further improvements;
- good information exchange;
- support for diversionary initiatives alongside the Youth Club;
- arrest of woman for stealing flowers from new communal garden on estate;
- Business Watch continues to develop with 95 members to date.

Grange (Middlefields Court)

- The shop area remains a challenge;
- establishment of a business forum for the businesses in the area;
- proposed improvements with view to reducing anti social behaviour including installation of cobble stones to deter football and bike riding on pavements and improved lighting;
- targeted patrols which will include summer holiday patrols under Operation Sharp;
- further diversionary activity proposed i.e. football events;
- increased use of ABCs;
- action taken against persons for anti-social use of motor vehicle.

Diversionary Activity

- The establishment of the Letchworth Youth Council to provide local youth input in determining appropriate Youth diversionary projects;
- Youthforia activities over the summer holiday period;
- Child UK to provide activities on Friday evenings;
- development of the Youth Crime Prevention Panel – to get youngsters involved in the crime prevention initiatives.

Other

1st July saw approx 25 caravans moving on to land at Letchworth Rugby club – a quick response by police and NHDC saw the group being served with appropriate notice the next morning and all of the group moving by lunchtime.
Funded mountain bikes for PCSOs which have provided greater mobility and visibility.

RESOLVED: That Inspector Thorne be thanked for his informative presentation.

10. LETCHWORTH AREA COMMITTEE SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS – REVIEW OF 2006 – 2009 AND PROPOSALS FOR 2009 – 2012

Councillor Michael Paterson declared a personal interest as representative of NHDC to North Hertfordshire Council for Voluntary Service and the Arts Council for North Herts.

The Head of Community Development and Cultural Services presented the report. He advised the Committee that no decision was required from this meeting regarding specific Service Level Agreements (SLA) and proposed that detailed discussions regarding specific SLA be delegated to the Chairman and/or Vice Chairman. He advised that there is no requirement for Area Committees to have SLA, but this method of funding gives greater security to the recipients and can often be used as a basis for them to apply for funding from other sources. The various options regarding SLA were explained as: continue SLA at current level; increase SLA using the development budget to fund the increase; stop renewing SLA; consider new SLA for organisations that approach the Committee for funding every year. It may also be considered that some centrally funded SLA are more appropriately managed by this Committee. He advised that a further report will be presented to this Committee in November 2008 as part of the Corporate Business Planning Process.

Councillors debated the report including that funds resulting from any SLA that was discontinued would be returned to the Area Committee budget for reallocation; that any centrally funded SLA deemed to be more appropriately in this Committee's remit would result in the relevant finance being transferred and that consideration should be given to Council priorities when granting a SLA.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Letchworth Area Committee notes the review of the local Service Level Agreement arrangements for 2007/8 as set out in Appendix 2 of the report;
- (2) That the Letchworth Area Committee notes that a rebalancing of funding of Service Level Agreements is proposed to better reflect the district wide/local area focus;
- (3) That the detailed negotiations with individual projects be conducted by relevant officers, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement and Rural Affairs and Committee Chairmen and Vice Chairmen;
- (4) That the Letchworth Area Committee notes the proposed timescales for implementing the Service Level Agreements;
- (5) That the Head of Community Development and Cultural Affairs bring a further report to the Letchworth Area Committee at the meeting to be held on 19 November 2008 as part of the Corporate Business Planning Process.

REASON FOR DECISION: To confirm the future strategic policy direction for the programme of financial assistance for the voluntary and community sector, through the negotiations of Service Level Agreements.

11. CHAMPION NEWS

The Community Development Officer (CDO) presented a report from the Head of Community Development & Cultural Services to the Committee, which set out the activities undertaken for Letchworth Garden City since the meeting of the Committee held on 4 June 2008. He brought to the Members' attention some important community-based activities.

Wilbury Youth Issues

The CDO informed the Committee that details of the planned football training events had been circulated to Icknield and Wilbury schools.

Rap-Aid

The CDO informed the Committee that Rap-Aid had been supported to apply for Mediabox funding and that the outcome of this would be known after 1 August 2008.

Westbury Action Group (WAG)

The CDO informed the Committee that a list of actions had been identified and that this will be circulated to all Ward Councillors.

Jack Wilkinson Memorial Garden

The CDO advised the Committee that replanting of shrubs and trees in the Jack Wilkinson Memorial Garden would take place later in the year.

Letchworth Festival

The Head of Community Development and Cultural Services advised the Committee that the event management company (CCEM) had confirmed that this event will not take place in 2008. However, they would try to hold the event in 2009. He also advised that the Rap-Aid festival would not take place as they has been unsuccessful in raising sufficient funding. Members requested that the minute regarding grant funding to Letchworth Arts Centre discussed at the meeting of this Committee on 21 January 2008 be circulated to Members prior to any future discussion on festivals.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the actions taken by the Community Development Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being for Letchworth Garden City be endorsed.
- (2) That the Committee & Member Services Officer circulate the minute regarding allocation of grant funding to Letchworth Arts Centre discussed at the meeting of this Committee held on 21 January 2008.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To keep Members of the Committee apprised of the latest developments in community activities in Letchworth Garden City.

12. LETCHWORTH COMMITTEE DEVELOPMENT AND AREA VISIONING BUDGETS 2008/2009

The Community Development Officer (CDO) presented a report of the Head of Community Development & Cultural Services to the Committee, which set out the current expenditure and balances of the Area Committee delegated budgets. Replacement spreadsheets detailing the budgets were circulated due to an error in production of the spreadsheets dispatched with the agenda. He also brought to the Committee's attention details of recent requests received for Area Committee Development Discretionary Grant Funding, made by community groups and local organisations.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Committee is asked to note the budgetary expenditure, balances and carry forwards from the Development Budgets and the Visioning Budgets;
- (2) That the Committee notes and acknowledges the amounts of uncommitted Visioning, Development Discretionary Funds within each respective Budget and considers the allocation of those funds to projects and initiatives.

13. GRANT APPLICATION – LETCHWORTH CARIBBEAN HARMONY GROUP

RESOLVED: That the Committee award a grant of £1000 from the 2008 – 2009 Discretionary Budget to the Letchworth Caribbean Harmony Group as support funding towards costs of promoting Black History Month and a children's Christmas party.

14. GRANT APPLICATION – HOWARD GARDEN SOCIAL AND DAY CARE CENTRE

Councillor Lorna Kercher had previously declared a prejudicial interest regarding the Howard Garden Social and Daycare Centre grant application. She therefore left the room.

RESOLVED: That the Committee award a grant of £900 from the 2008 – 2009 Discretionary Budget to Howard Garden Social and Day Care Centre as support funding towards the cost of purchasing new kitchen equipment.

Councillor Kercher returned to the room.

15. GRANT APPLICATION – NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE HIGHWAYS – JOINT MEMBER PANEL

Members debated the various requests for joint matched funding requested by the North Hertfordshire Highways – Joint Member Panel. The Committee agreed unanimously not to support the remedies proposed for a single rail fence at Abbots Road and a single rail fence at Mull Way.

The meeting closed at 9.45 p.m.

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Chairman