

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

LETCHWORTH COMMITTEE

**Meeting held at Council Offices, Gernon Road, Letchworth Garden City
on 24 January 2007 at 7.30p.m.**

MINUTES

- PRESENT:** *Councillors: M. Paterson (Chairman), Simon Bloxham (Vice-Chairman), Monica Bloxham, J.M. Cunningham, Melissa Davey, Gary Grindal, T.W. Hone, David Kearns, Lorna Kercher, David Levett, Lawrence McNamara, Elliot Needham and Mrs Lynda Needham.*
- IN ATTENDANCE:** *Patrick Candler (Head of Community Development and Cultural Services), David Miley (Democratic Services Manager), Tim Stephen (Community Development Manager), Ros Allwood (Cultural Services Manager) Ian Gourlay (Senior Committee & Member Services Officer) and Tim Hobman (Committee & Member Services Officer).*
- ALSO PRESENT:** *Inspector Geoff Camp and Sergeant Steve Oliphant (Hertfordshire Constabulary), Cllr. Michael Muir, Richard Bowran (Clerk to Letchworth Garden City Town Council) and 2 members of the Letchworth Garden City Town Council.*

The Chairman welcomed all those present to the meeting.

86. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Diane Proudlove.

87. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2007 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and signed by the Chairman.

88. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was submitted for consideration by the Committee.

89. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were received at the meeting.

90. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation at the meeting.

91. COMMUNITY POLICING UPDATE

A presentation was received from Geoff Camp, Hertfordshire Constabulary, on Policing within the Letchworth Area, who provided an update.

Inspector Camp began the presentation by introducing Sergeant Steve Oliphant as a new member of the Letchworth Community Team, replacing Sergeant Mike Wood, who had been promoted. Police Community Support Officer Narinda Padda had also joined the team replacing Dee Welch who had successfully been accepted to train as a regular Police Officer.

There had been a reduction in all crimes from April 2006 to January 2007. The detection rate had risen by 29.5%; violent crime was down 5%; burglaries were up from 78 to 80; motor crimes were down from 289 to 282; there had also been a reduction in criminal damage and theft from persons, which was down from 52 to 40.

The following points were made by Inspector Camp:

- Operation Saturnalia had been very successful in reducing burglary on the Jackmans Estate;
- In November 2005 there had been eleven robberies of which two females and two males had been found responsible and charged;
- Offenders had been identified regarding vehicle crime and the community team have been using 'trap cars' with great success;
- Four persons had been arrested for disorder and anti-social behaviour and the lead up to Christmas and the New Year was generally quiet;
- One resident of the Grange Estate had been issued with an anti-social behaviour order which would last until 15th May 2007, and anti-social behavior due to excessive alcohol consumption in the town centre has been largely dealt with;
- Anti-social behaviour street surgeries had been successful in reducing this and all types of crime. The next surgeries were to take place on Friday, 26th January 2007 between 6.30pm and 7.30pm at the Junction of Glebe Road and Common View, and between 8.00pm and 9.00pm at Southfields;
- A new policy had been introduced, which would see Police Community Support Officers visiting victims of criminal damage within 72 hours of the crime being committed;
- A drugs warrant was secured for a raid on the Grange Estate and two persons were charged;
- Operation Seer saw 21 arrests and 16 people charged;
- Continued work was being done to extend Neighbourhood Watch programmes and a very productive meeting had taken place at Mrs Howard Hall involving Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinators, Members and the local Police.

The Chairman thanked Inspector Geoff Camp for the presentation and wished Mike Wood and Dee Welch every success in their future careers.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To update the Members of Letchworth Area Committee of the recent Police activities in the Letchworth Area.

92. AREA GOVERNANCE AND COSTS OF DEMOCRACY

The Head of Community Development and Cultural Services presented a joint report of the Heads of Community Development and Cultural Services, Planning and Building Control and Legal and Democratic Services to the Committee that set out a series of proposals and options to determine savings which could be made if the Council's approach to its governance and decision making arrangements was restructured. The report had been presented to Cabinet at its meeting held on 19 December 2006 (Minute 119 refers).

The Head of Community Development and Cultural Services confirmed that this report was being brought to all five Area Committees as a direct response to implementing the Council's decision to make savings of £50,000 which was part of the Service and Financial Planning Process for 2006/2007.

The Head of Community Development and Cultural Services acknowledged that the proposals represented a fundamental change to the way that the Council's civic process currently operated, but stated that the resulting arrangements would be more streamlined and less bureaucratic. He also informed the Committee that the report before them presented only the outline proposals and principles, and that a further report with more detailed information about the proposals would be presented to Cabinet on 27 February 2007.

RESOLVED: That the report of the Heads of Community Development and Cultural Services, Planning and Building Control and Legal and Democratic Services be noted.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET: That the following key issues raised by the Letchworth Area Committee be taken into account by Cabinet when considering the recommendations in the report:

- (1) There was support for a central Planning and Development Committee, but it was suggested that two Committees might be a better option as to maintain the local area knowledge that individual ward Councillors might so possess about Planning matters in their ward;
- (2) More options for the restructure of Area Committees should be prepared as there was a concern about the different size of the Committees, particularly should Southern Rural Area Committee be amalgamated into the Letchworth and Hitchin Area Committees;
- (3) The cost savings were only small compared with the disruption to the democratic process, and any reduction in committees and staffing would have a detrimental effect on democracy;
- (4) Consideration be given to the proposal of Full Council using Committee rules allowing decisions to be made, and therefore reducing the cost of officers attending all five Area Committees;
- (5) That any decision be deferred until the findings of the Lyons Review are known.

REASON FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) To provide the Letchworth Area Committee with an opportunity to provide its views on the proposed changes to the Area Governance and decision making arrangements;
- (2) To ensure that savings identified within the context of the Service and Financial Planning process for 2006/2007 and beyond are achieved.

93. POLLING DISTRICT AND POLLING PLACES

The Democratic Services Manager presented a report of the Chief Executive and Returning Officer, which assisted the Committee to consider revisions to the polling districts and polling places within the area of Letchworth Committee.

The Democratic Services Manager made particular reference to the definitions of Polling District, Polling Place and Polling Station as set out in section 3.4 of the report. He also welcomed Members' views in writing as to suitable locations for Polling Stations.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the polling districts be established as described in Appendix A to the report.
- (2) That all polling places within the Area of the Committee be defined in such a way that they are coterminous with the polling districts.
- (3) That the Democratic Services Manager provide the Committee with a report detailing the effectiveness of the new polling arrangements in the Local Government Election to be held on 3rd May 2007.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To enable the Council to review the Authority's polling districts in light of the District of North Hertfordshire (Electoral Changes) Order 2006.

94. AN ARTS, MUSEUMS & HERITAGE STRATEGY FOR NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE

The Cultural Services Manager presented a report of the Head of Community Development & Cultural Services to the Committee, accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation, which advised them on the development of an Arts, Museums & Heritage Strategy for North Hertfordshire. She also invited the Committee to comment on the draft Strategy prior to final consideration by Cabinet at its meeting on 27 March 2007 and then Council on 29 March 2007.

The presentation outlined why North Hertfordshire District Council needed an Arts, Museums & Heritage Strategy; what the Strategy consisted of; the background and context of developing a Strategy; current provisions in North Hertfordshire; the consultation process; and the timescale for the Strategy.

Letchworth Area Committee made the following comments to be considered in the final report to Cabinet and Council:

- That any Strategy should include provision for the Elderly; in particular mobile activities for those residents in North Hertfordshire less able to visit Arts, Museum and Heritage sites.
- That any Strategy should specifically mention services for women, particularly in view of the Women Resource Centre in Stevenage which was linked with the District.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the draft Arts, Museums & Heritage Strategy be noted.
- (2) That comments made by the Committee be incorporated into the final report for approval by Cabinet and Council at their respective meetings in March 2007.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS: To ensure that a wide consultation is undertaken on the Arts, Museums & Heritage Strategy.

95. CHAMPION NEWS

The Community Development Manager presented a report of the Head of Community Development & Cultural Services to the Committee, which set out the activities undertaken by the Community Development Officer for Letchworth Garden City since the meeting of the Committee held on 13 December 2006, and brought to Members' attention some important community based activities that would be taking place during the next few months.

The Community Development Manager commented on specific sections of the report as follows:

- In respect of section 3.6 – Mrs. Howard Hall – An open day and Members' Tour would be arranged as soon as possible.
- In respect of section 3.7 – Letchworth Arts Centre – It was confirmed that a festival would take place on the weekend of the 30th June 2007.
- In respect of section 3.10 – Letchworth Outdoor Pool – The Leisure Project Manager was in the process of preparing a schedule of works.

The Community Development Manager also commented that, regarding Howard Park and Gardens, consultants had prepared designs on the proposed redevelopment. Any designs would be submitted to the meeting of Cabinet to be held on 27th February 2007.

RESOLVED: That the actions taken by the Community Development Officer to promote greater community capacity and well – being for the Letchworth Garden City community be endorsed.

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

96. LETCHWORTH COMMITTEE DEVELOPMENT & AREA VISIONING BUDGET 2006/2007

The Community Development Manager 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. 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 organizations.

it was noted that the Committee's unallocated Capital Visioning Budget amounted to £16,355.

RESOLVED: That the budgetary expenditure, balances and carry forwards from the Development Budgets and the allocated Visioning Budgets be noted;

REASONS FOR DECISIONS: The allocation of funds will improve the services provided by local organizations and groups that are available and accessed by members of the community.

97. **GRANT APPLICATION – NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE BOOK FESTIVAL**

RESOLVED: That the sum of £300 be awarded to the North Hertfordshire Book Festival as a financial contribution towards the organisation of the 2007 Festival.

REASON FOR DECISION: The awarding of financial assistance to voluntary organisations and the use of discretionary spending allows the Committee to further the aims and strategic priorities of the Council.

The meeting closed at 9.20 p.m.

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Chairman