

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

LETCHWORTH COMMITTEE

**Meeting held in the Council Chamber, District Council Offices,
Gernon Road, Letchworth Garden City
on 25 July 2007 at 7.30p.m.**

MINUTES

PRESENT: *Councillors: D. Levett (Chairman), Melissa Davey (Vice-Chairman), S. Bloxham, J.M. Cunningham, Gary Grindal, David Kearns, Lorna Kercher, Ian Mantle and Mrs. L.A. Needham.*

IN ATTENDANCE: *Alan Fleck (Community Development Officer), Ian Gourlay (Senior Committee & Member Services Officer).*

ALSO PRESENT: *5 members of the public.*

The Chairman welcomed all those present to the meeting.

16. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors John Booth, Allison Dear, T.W. Hone and Arthur Jarman.

17. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 17 May 2007 and 6 June 2007 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

18. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman stated that he had agreed to the Committee considering an urgent item of business in respect of the Hertfordshire County Council's review of primary school provision in Letchworth Garden City, following the outcome of the Local Forum regarding this matter held immediately prior to the meeting. The reason for this urgent item was that the consultation period for the review closed on 6 August 2007, some 6 weeks before the next meeting of the Committee.

19. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations of interests were made during the meeting.

20. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Petition – Ordelmere: Traffic Calming Issues

Ms Paula Bracher presented a petition containing 110 signatures in respect of traffic calming issues in Ordelmere on the Grange Estate, Letchworth Garden City. The petition sought the installation of traffic calming measures in the form of speed humps and a reduction of the speed limit to 20mph in Ordelmere.

Ms Bracher made the following points during her presentation:

- Ordelmere was a narrow residential street, comprising 70 houses. The road was parked along one side by residents, with two way traffic using the remaining lane. The road had one layby with spaces for four vehicles, and an entrance to 56 garages;

- Ordelmere was centrally located, between two schools, community facilities, shops and the Grange Roads exit onto Wilbury Way. The road was dead straight and joined Northfields and Southfields, and was used as a short cut between these roads attracting, especially at peak times, high volumes of traffic, often at high speed. The use of Ordelmere allowed traffic to avoid the new traffic calming measures in Northfields;
- The traffic, the narrow road, and parking issues made the road unsafe for residents to load passengers into their vehicles, as the traffic approached from both directions, often very close to those vehicles. Residents who had driveways had complained that the road was very dangerous to pull out onto, their line of vision being obscured by parked vehicles and because of the one lane, two way traffic;
- Large vehicles, such as lorries and delivery vans, used the road on a daily basis, and often mounted the pavements, blocked driveways and damaged grass verges. The entrance to the block of 56 garages, few of which were used by residents, was used by commercial vans, causing noise and sometimes fly-tipping;
- Ordelmere was used by pedestrians, but residents felt it was unsafe because: the path in the west side was too narrow and close to traffic, there were no grass verges, and on refuse collection day pedestrians often had to step out into the road; both paths at the Southfields junction had no dropped kerbs, and so wheelchair and pram users had to leave the path and use drives to cross the road; and pedestrians often had to cross between parked cars which could prove dangerous, due to traffic speeds.

In seeking the Committee's support to the petition, Ms Bracher offered some possible solutions to the problem, including the installation of speed bumps; a reduction of the speed limit to 20mph; the creation of more off-road parking for residents; and a policy giving Ordelmere residents priority over others to any newly vacated garages in the garage block.

Members asked a number of questions. In debating the matter, the Committee expressed a good degree of sympathy with the plight of Ms Bracher and the residents of Ordelmere, and was supportive of the petition. It was acknowledged that the issue was properly a matter for the North Hertfordshire Highways Partnership Joint Member Panel.

RECOMMENDED TO NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE HIGHWAYS PARTNERSHIP JOINT MEMBER PANEL: That consideration be given to the implementation of a traffic calming scheme in Ordelmere on the Grange Estate, Letchworth Garden City, to include possible elements such as the installation of speed bumps, a reduction of the speed limit to 20mph, and the creation of more off-road parking for residents.

REASON FOR DECISION: To support the petitioners on the grounds of highway and pedestrian safety.

21. LETCHWORTH AND BALDOCK URBAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The Chairman invited nominations from the Committee for Members to serve on the Working Group to be set up by the County Council on the Letchworth and Baldock Urban Transportation Plan.

RESOLVED: That Councillors S. Bloxham and Ian Mantle be nominated by the Committee to serve on the Working Group to be set up by the County Council on the Letchworth and Baldock Urban Transportation Plan.

REASONS FOR DECISION: To ensure Letchworth's views are fully represented on the Working Group.

22. LETCHWORTH COMMITTEE DEVELOPMENT & AREA VISIONING BUDGET 2007/2008

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. 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.

A number of Members expressed concerns about some budget under spends, a few of which went as far back as 2004/05. The Chairman commented that he was aware of some of the budget anomalies, and would be looking into them with the Head of Community Development and Cultural Services, with a view to a report on the matter being submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

In respect of the recommendation in the report to part fund an additional street light in Haselfoot (in conjunction with match funding from Hertfordshire Highways), the Committee was not supportive of this proposal. Members felt that street lighting was solely the responsibility of the County Council / Hertfordshire Highways, and therefore that the District Council should not be funding such schemes. Accordingly, the Committee deferred the request for the Haselfoot street light, and asked that a report be submitted to its next meeting detailing the precise legal responsibilities/obligations of the County Council / Hertfordshire Highways for street lighting matters.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the budgetary expenditure, balances and carry forwards from the Development Budgets and the allocated Visioning Budgets be noted;
- (2) That a report be submitted to the next meeting detailing the unspent portions of the Committee's budgets, together with reasons for these under spends, to enable the Committee to determine whether or not it would wish to return such under spends to those budgets for future re-allocation;
- (3) That the possible part-funding (in conjunction with match funding from Hertfordshire Highways) of an additional street light in Haselfoot in Wilbury Ward be deferred, and that officers be required to submit a report to the next meeting detailing the precise legal responsibilities/obligations of the County Council / Hertfordshire Highways for street lighting matters.

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

23. GRANT APPLICATION – THE GRANGE IMPROVEMENT FORUM

Claire Bowditch (Chairperson of the Grange Improvement Forum) gave a brief presentation on the Forum's request for grant assistance. She explained that this was the final stage of the Grange Community Garden project, which had proved a great success. The grant request was for £1,000 to fund the costs of the paint and equipment, together with the artist's time, to complete the winning designs for the mural. She circulated the winning entries, as designed by local children.

Claire answered a number of questions raised by Members, following which the Committee expressed its support to the grant request.

RESOLVED: That the Grange Improvement Forum be awarded the sum of £1,000, from the Committee's Discretionary Budget, to part-fund a mural, to be painted in the archway from the shops up to the gardens, and towards the holding of workshops for the residents of the Grange.

REASON FOR DECISION: The allocation of funds will improve the services provided by the local organisations and groups that are available and accessed by various members of the community.

24. GRANT APPLICATION – LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY RUGBY CLUB

Alastair Stewart (Letchworth Rugby Club) gave a brief presentation on the Club's request for grant assistance. He advised that the request was to assist in the funding of a Rugby Festival for Under 7s to Under 12s. At present, there were no such festivals in the A1(M) corridor, the nearest one being in Cambridge and Bishop's Stortford. The sum of £950 requested would contribute towards the general costs of the festival, particularly the reimbursement of necessary costs incurred by coaches and referees.

Mr Stewart answered a number of questions raised by Members. The Committee noted that the sum recommended by the Community Development Officer was £500, but nevertheless supported the full grant application for £950.

RESOLVED: That Letchworth Garden City Rugby Club be awarded the sum of £950, from the Committee's Discretionary Budget, to help fund the Mini-Rugby Festival to be held in September 2007 involving teams of 7-12 year-olds from Letchworth, Hitchin, Royston and Baldock.

REASON FOR DECISION: The allocation of funds will improve the services provided by the local organisations and groups that are available and accessed by various members of the community.

25. HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL – REVIEW OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PROVISION IN LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY

The Chairman referred to the Local Forum held prior to the meeting to discuss the County Council's current review of primary school provision in Letchworth Garden City. The Forum's discussion had centred around two main issues - the amalgamation of Lannock and Radburn schools on a single site rather than closure of one or the other and the retention of Westbury School and its building, if not as a school then as the sole remaining community facility on the Westbury Estate. The Committee supported the feeling of the Local Forum, which sought to convey the importance of that community facility to the County Council, and to ensure that the social impact of any decision was fully taken into consideration by the County Council as part of its final decision.

RESOLVED: That, in respect of the Review of Primary School Provision in Letchworth Garden City, the Hertfordshire County Council Education Panel and Cabinet be informed of the Committee's view that the social impact of any decision was fully taken into consideration by the County Council as part of its final decision on the Review.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure a response is submitted to the County Council prior to the expiry of the consultation period on 6 August 2007.

26. 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 6 June 2007, and brought to Members' attention some important community-based activities that would be taking place during the next few months.

In respect of the North Herts Youth Conference, the Vice-Chairman reported that she had attended this event, and that it had been a great success, with an excellent input

from Rap-Aid. She added that she would be pushing strongly for the speedy establishment of the Letchworth Youth Forum/Council.

With regard to the Rap-Aid Letchworth Festival (21-28 July 2007), a number of Members commented that this, too, had been a great success, for young and older residents alike.

The Committee was concerned that the Letchworth Urban Youth Festival, scheduled for 30 June and 1 July 2007, had been postponed, and that the proposed alternative dates of 8 and 9 September 2007 clashed with Heritage Weekend. The Committee asked the CDO to submit a report to the next meeting detailing the consequences of this change of date in terms of abortive costs, including road closures.

The Committee agreed that the Arts Development Manager (on behalf of the Letchworth Arts Centre) be invited to its next meeting to provide an update on the Arts Centre's activities, on the various sources of grant funding obtained, and on how this funding had been utilised.

The Committee also requested that it would be useful if a report could be submitted to a future meeting on the success or otherwise of the various 2007 summer festivals/events in the town, in order to highlight any difficulties experienced (licensing, organisational, etc.), with a view to future improvement.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report of the Head of Community Development and Cultural Services be noted;
- (2) That the CDO submit a report to the next meeting detailing the consequences of the change of date of the Letchworth Urban Youth Festival in terms of abortive costs, including road closures;
- (3) That the Arts Development Manager (on behalf of the Letchworth Arts Centre) be invited to the next meeting to provide an update on the Arts Centre's activities, on the various sources of grant funding obtained, and on how this funding had been utilised;
- (4) That a report be submitted to a future meeting on the success or otherwise of the various 2007 summer festivals/events in the town, in order to highlight any difficulties experienced (licensing, organisational, etc.), with a view to future improvement.

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

27. LETCHWORTH STREET PARKING AND ACCESS PROBLEMS (INCLUDING VERGE DAMAGE)

The Committee considered the list of Damaged Highway Verge Assessments submitted to its meeting held on 11 January 2007, together with the relevant minute of that meeting, which had prioritised the Assessments and had referred them to the North Hertfordshire Highways Joint Member Panel.

The Committee accepted that there was little likelihood of many of the schemes identified in the report progressing, and recommended that the North Hertfordshire Highways Partnership Joint Member Panel should be asked to identify and fund at least two schemes from the Committee's Priority List for progression.

The Committee considered that possibly the best means of eradicating some of the problem areas set out in the report was to properly enforce against verge parking.

The Committee felt that it would be appropriate to consider the agreed Hertfordshire Highways 2007/08 programme of work for Letchworth Garden City at its November 2007 meeting, in order to identify potential additional schemes for consideration by the Joint Member Panel.

RECOMMENDED TO NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE HIGHWAYS PARTNERSHIP JOINT MEMBER PANEL: That at least two schemes from the Letchworth Committee's previously Prioritised List of Damaged Highway Verge Assessments be identified and funded for progression.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee detailing the current enforcement measures undertaken by the Council to prevent verge parking, and how this could be improved;
- (2) That the agreed Hertfordshire Highways 2007/08 programme of work for Letchworth Garden City be considered at the November 2007 meeting, in order to identify potential additional schemes for consideration by the Joint Member Panel.

REASON FOR DECISION: To attempt to resolve on-going problems of verge parking in Letchworth Garden City.

The meeting closed at 9.35p.m.

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Chairman