

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

LETCHWORTH COMMITTEE

MINUTES

**Meeting held at Council Offices, Gernon Road, Letchworth Garden City
on Monday, 2 October 2006 at 7.30p.m.**

PRESENT: *Councillors M. Paterson (Chairman), Simon Bloxham (Vice-Chairman), Monica Bloxham, J.M. Cunningham, David Kearns, Lorna Kercher, David Levett, Lawrence McNamara, Elliot Needham, Mrs Lynda Needham and Diane Proudlove.*

IN ATTENDANCE: *David Scholes (Head of Planning & Building Control), Patrick Candler (Head of Community Development & Cultural Services), Simon Ellis (Principal Planning Officer), Tim Stephen (Community Development Manager), Louise Symes (Planning Projects Manager), Steve Geach (Parks & Countryside Manager) and Ian Gourlay (Senior Committee & Member Services Officer).*

ALSO PRESENT: 4 members of the public.

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed all those present to the meeting.

38. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Melissa Davey, Gary Grindal and T.W. Hone.

39. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 16 August 2006 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and signed by the Chairman.

40. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was submitted for consideration by the Committee.

41. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor M. Paterson (Chairman) declared a prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 8 – Letchworth Arts Centre – as he was one of the North Hertfordshire District Council's representatives on the Letchworth Garden City Arts Partnership. Councillor Paterson left the meeting for the duration of this item.

Councillor David Kearns declared a prejudicial interest in Agenda Items 6 & 8 – Letchworth Arts Centre – as he was one of the North Hertfordshire District Council's representatives on the Letchworth Garden City Arts Partnership. Councillor Kearns left the meeting for the duration of these items.

Councillor Mrs L.R. Kercher declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 8 – Letchworth Arts Centre - as she was on the Board of Directors of the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation, who contributed towards the funding of the Arts Centre. Councillor Kercher declared her right to speak and vote on this item.

Councillor Mrs L.A. Needham declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 8 – Letchworth Arts Centre. Councillor Needham declared her right to speak, but not vote, on this item.

Councillor Elliot Needham declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 8 – Letchworth Arts Centre. Councillor Needham declared his right to speak, but not vote, on this item.

Councillor David Levett declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 13 – Letchworth Committee Development and Area Visioning Budgets 2006/07 – as he was a governor of Lannock School. Councillor Levett declared his right to speak and vote on this item.

Councillor J.M. Cunningham declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 13 – Letchworth Committee Development and Area Visioning Budgets 2006/07 – as he was a governor of Lannock School. Councillor Cunningham declared his right to speak and vote on this item.

Councillor Diane Proudlove declared a prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 14 – Planning Applications: 9 Eastholm Green, Letchworth Garden City – as she and her husband were the applicants. Councillor Proudlove left the meeting for the duration of this item.

Councillor David Kearns declared a prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 14 – Planning Applications: 17 Northfields, Letchworth Garden City – as he was a friend of the applicant. Councillor Kearns left the meeting for the duration of this item.

42. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Having given due notice, Mr Paul Lai addressed the Committee in respect of Item 9 on the agenda – Letchworth Garden City Town Centre Strategy – Draft Supplementary Planning Document and Associated Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment.

Mr Lai congratulated officers on putting together a good first draft, but he believed that the strategy was not quite ready for public consultation. He felt that a number of areas could be improved, but in view of time constraints, concentrated on 3 of them.

Retail Park – Mr Lai considered that the Retail Park had become the de facto main town centre of Letchworth. The revised Planning Policy Guidance Note 6 (PPG6) was not just about town centres, but required local authorities to apply a holistic approach to all retail developments, and yet there were no policy statements regarding the Retail Park in the Strategy. PPG6 also emphasised minimising car use. At present, many people take their car to travel between the two centres to complete their shopping. It was therefore inappropriate to consider the viability of moving the shops in the Retail Park to the town centre for the sake of the environment. The Council should make a policy statement whether to (a) allow the Retail Park to grow until it became the new town centre, (b) halt the growth, or (c) encourage the retailers to move to the town centre and redevelop the area.

Suggested Store Grouping and Design – the suggestion in the Strategy regarding the spreading out of non-A1 shops was not shopper friendly. Mr Lai considered that shoppers preferred a number of smaller cores (eg. a core of shoe shops, a core of clothing shops, etc.), rather than one large mixed shopping core. With regard to takeaways, shoppers preferred somewhere to sit and enjoy their meal – by having a core of takeaways, covered seating and small gardens could be provided and would help to bring more of a family atmosphere back to the town centre.

Prioritising Development Areas – A typical major retail store was over 7,000 sq. m in area. Why did the Strategy contain plans for only one major store over the next decade? If the town was trying to attract major multiples into the town centre, then at least 20,000 sq. m of floorspace was needed. PPG6 required local authorities to protect and strengthen existing urban and rural centres – in respect of Opportunity Sites LTC1, LTC3 and part of LTC2, the Strategy appeared to be doing the opposite, thereby weakening and putting at risk what was currently working. These very businesses were the ones which had been keeping the vitality and viability of the town centre for a number of years. The East of England Spatial Strategy required local authorities to specify their recommendations for mitigating adverse effects – Mr Lai could not see any such recommendations in the Strategy document.

The Chairman thanked Mr Lai for his contribution.

43. LETCHWORTH ARTS CENTRE

The Committee received a presentation on the Letchworth Arts Centre from Maria Iredale, the Centre's Arts Development Manager.

Maria advised that Committee that, over the past six months, the Arts Centre had formulated a Business Plan; was in the process of appointing new trustees; had attracted 28 new

volunteers (many of them under 18 years of age); and had run a successful summer programme of events. The Centre had launched a new education programme for the arts, and had organized a number of events for all ages, including good food nights. A children's disco was to take place before Christmas.

Maria commented that, in January 2007, the Centre was to commence an Adult programme. In the Summer of 2007, it was hoped to hold a major arts event across the town. The Centre had entered into a partnership with North Herts College in order to run an education programme, and had been hired for use by other community groups.

Maria explained that the Centre had received nearly £17,000 from various national, local and lottery organisations, and was awaiting the results of further bids totaling £325,000. Maria had also been involved in assisting "Big Boost" lottery submissions made by local schools.

In conclusion, Maria stated that the Arts Centre had massive potential for growth and development, and that she hoped the Committee would assist in regenerating the creative centre of the town.

44. LETCHWORTH FESTIVAL – EVALUATION REPORT

The Community Development Manager presented a report of the Strategic Director of Customer Services advising Members of the success of the "Letchworth Festival 2006", held on 22 July 2006 in the Broadway Gardens.

The Committee was informed that, despite some inclement weather conditions, approximately 5,000 people visited the event. Anecdotal evidence suggested that most people valued the breadth of activities and events on offer during the day.

RESOLVED: That the Committee continues, where practical, to support organizations who wish to use the Broadway Gardens for public events in the future.

REASON FOR DECISION: To continue support will serve to help promote the use of Broadway Gardens as an event space.

45. LETCHWORTH ARTS CENTRE – FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Councillor Simon Bloxham (Vice-Chairman) took the Chair for this item.

The Community Development Manager presented a report of the Head of Community Development and Cultural Services proposing that the Committee continued to support the Letchworth Arts Centre through the development of a three year Service Level Agreement (SLA) for the period 1 April 2007 – 31 March 2010.

The report re-iterated many of the comments made by the Arts Development Manager during her presentation made earlier in the meeting in respect of the significant progress made by the Centre over the past six months.

The Community Development Manager tabled some revisions to Recommendations 9.2 and 9.3.

The Committee discussed the report, focussing in particular on the level of the proposed Service Level Agreement. Members were generally supportive of the work carried out by the Arts Centre, but were not prepared to enter into a SLA at £15,000 per year for the next three financial years. Accordingly, the following amendment was proposed and seconded, as a further revision to Recommendations 9.2, 9.3 and 9.4, with Recommendations 9.1 and 9.5 remaining unchanged:-

"9.2 That the Committee commits, in principle, to establish a three year Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the Letchworth Arts Centre with grants of £15,000 in the year 2007/08, £10,000 in the year 2008/09 and £5,000 in the year 2009/10 to support the development of the Centre for that period;

9.3 That the Committee agrees that the Letchworth Arts Centre be asked as part of the SLA to organise a Summer Festival in the year 2007/08 and that the sum of £12,500

be paid to the Centre under the terms of the SLA as an additional contribution to the core funding of the Centre;

- 9.4 That the Committee agrees to consider the commissioning of the Letchworth Arts Centre to provide an annual Summer Festival and other attractions and events during the remainder of the term of the SLA.”

Upon being put to the vote, the above amendment was carried.

In reaching the above decision, Members made it clear that it did not preclude the Letchworth Arts Centre from returning to the Committee in the future with a progress report and possible request for changes to the SLA.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the significant achievements and progress made by the Letchworth Arts Centre during the past six months, as outlined in the report, be commended;
- (2) That the Committee commits, in principle, to establish a three year Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the Letchworth Arts Centre with grants of £15,000 in the year 2007/08, £10,000 in the year 2008/09 and £5,000 in the year 2009/10 to support the development of the Centre for that period;
- (3) That the Committee agrees that the Letchworth Arts Centre be asked as part of the SLA to organise a Summer Festival in the year 2007/08 and that the sum of £12,500 be paid to the Centre under the terms of the SLA as an additional contribution to the core funding of the Centre;
- (4) That the Committee agrees to consider the commissioning of the Letchworth Arts Centre to provide an annual Summer Festival and other attractions and events during the remainder of the term of the SLA;
- (5) That, in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation to Officers, the Democratic Services Manager, in consultation with Group Leaders, be requested to appoint a Member of the Letchworth Committee to serve on the new LAC Board.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure the sustainability of the Letchworth Arts Centre and improve the arts and cultural services to Letchworth and surrounding areas.

46. LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY – DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT AND ASSOCIATED SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL AND STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The Head of Planning and Building Control, assisted by the Planning Projects Manager, gave a presentation on the Letchworth Town Centre Strategy, a draft of which had been circulated to all Members of the Committee.

The Committee considered the presentation in conjunction with report of the Head of Planning and Building Control on the Strategy. In general, the draft was very well received as a consultation document to promote discussion and debate. The following comments were made by Members:-

- The questions included in the Strategy document should be made available to consultees on a separate sheet/form;
- In respect of publicity, consideration should be given to a “wrap-around” on the front of local newspapers, rather than leaflets;
- The extent of the area within and immediately adjacent to the town centre, and in which residents and businesses would be consulted by letter, should be reviewed, particularly given the proposals in the draft Strategy to review the road network;
- Concern that the potential development of civic/community buildings on Opportunity Sites LTC6 and LTC7 in Broadway would create on street car parking problems in adjacent streets;
- In respect of Policy 21 – Residential Development: Letchworth Town Centre, appropriate attention should be given to residents’ car parking in town centre locations;

- The Strategy provided little guidance on the night time economy – this could mean different things to different people.

In endorsing the Strategy and recommending to Cabinet its issue for public consultation, the Committee agreed that a Letchworth Member Workshop should be held on a date to be agreed following the stakeholder/public meeting to be held in mid November.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Cabinet be recommended to issue the Letchworth Garden City Town Centre Strategy Draft SPD, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, and the associated SA/SEA document, for public consultation;
- (2) That the public consultation process for the Draft Strategy, as set out in section 5 of the report, be agreed;
- (3) That officers be requested to arrange a Letchworth Member Workshop to discuss the Strategy on a date to be agreed following the stakeholder/public meeting to be held in mid November.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Council to produce a Strategy that provides an overall framework for guiding development and enhancement opportunities within the town centre over the next 15 years and, in doing so, contributing towards achieving the Council's strategic objectives.

47. HOWARD PARK AND GARDENS – LOTTERY RENOVATIONS

The Head of Leisure & Environmental Services sought the Committee's approval to a recommendation to Cabinet for a proposed revision to the programme of public conveniences which best ensured that the Council was able to meet the requirements of the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) in the renovations of Howard Park and Gardens.

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting held on 27 June 2006, the Cabinet had agreed to appoint a firm of consultants to help develop an application to the HLF for this project (the HLF could contribute up to 75% of the project cost). Initial landscape assessments had highlighted issues in relation to car parking and the public conveniences.

In relation to car parking, it was noted that to meet local need, health and safety and the requirements of the HLF, there may as the scheme develops be proposals to alter the current parking arrangements in the Park and Gardens.

With regard to the public conveniences, the Committee was advised that the Council's Capital programme contained a budget allocation of £93,500 to refurbish the existing toilets in Howard Park. However, until the results of consultation become known and a scheme developed, the Council will not know what facilities would be appropriate or acceptable to the HLF.

In order to ensure that the HLF requirements would be met, it was important that as much flexibility as possible was maintained for the scheme. It was feasible that the HLF could require the northerly and easterly views of the park to be re-established, which would mean the existing building would need to be moved. Alternatively, the HLF could be satisfied with the current location. Until a draft design for the whole park and gardens was produced, it would be impracticable for the HLF to comment on individual elements of the scheme, such as toilet provision.

The report contained the following three options, including the advantages and disadvantages for each, with officers recommending option 3:-

- Option 1 – Continue with the current renovation programme for the public conveniences;
- Option 2 – Incorporate the entire renovations of the toilet provision within the HLF lottery scheme;
- Option 3 – Undertake minor remedial works with an estimated value of £10,000 to the conveniences, including time controlled entrance doors, to bring them up to an acceptable standard and leave the major renovations as part of the HLF lottery scheme.

The Committee was supportive of Option 3. Members also requested officers to carry out some planting and undertake a general tidy up of the park and gardens.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the issues relating to car parking in the Howard Park and Gardens, as listed in section 4.3 of the report, be noted;
- (2) That officers be requested to carry out some planting and undertake a general tidy up of the Howard Park and Gardens.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET: That the minor remedial works listed for the Public Conveniences at Howard Park, estimated at £10,000, be included in the District wide renovation programme and a revenue budget be approved, with the major renovation works being undertaken as part of the HLF lottery scheme.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure best value for money services are provided.

48. NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE HIGHWAYS PARTNERSHIP JOINT MEMBER PANEL – DISCRETIONARY BUDGET FOR 2006/07 AND 2007/08

The Chairman provided an update on the highway schemes identified by the Committee at its meeting on 16 August 2006, for which the NHDC Chief Engineer and North Herts District Manager (Hertfordshire Highways) had been asked to provide cost estimates.

In respect of the scheme relating to the conversion of the pedestrian crossing on the Broadway (adjacent to Morrison's supermarket) to a pelican crossing, the District Manager had advised that the cost of such a scheme would be in the region of £40,000. However, he was of the opinion that the scheme should not be pursued as it would tend to aggravate the existing problem of severance between Morrison's and the rest of the town centre in that it would inhibit the flow of pedestrians across the Broadway. If through vehicular traffic was delayed by the current arrangement, then that was entirely in accordance with the town centre environment. Furthermore, a signalized crossing could result in pedestrians "taking a chance" when the lights were against them, thereby increasing the risk of accidents.

In respect of the scheme relating to parking regulations that could be placed along Icknield Way between Bedford Road and Archers Way and on Icknield Way between Bedford Road and Cross Street, it had been pointed out parking regulations were a responsibility of NHDC.

In respect of the issue in respect of verge parking, the Committee was advised that a report upon this matter was to be submitted to the next meeting of the North Hertfordshire Highways Partnership Joint Member Panel on 16 October 2006.

In respect of the amount of £5,000 previously granted by the Committee from the Area Visioning Budget towards the cost of traffic calming in Norton Road, Members agreed that the matter be referred to the North Hertfordshire Highways Joint Member Panel meeting on 16 October 2006, with a request that the North Herts District Manager (Hertfordshire Highways), in consultation with the NHDC/NHHP Liaison Officer and the HCC Safer Routes to School Officer, be requested to devise and cost various alternative traffic calming and/or traffic management schemes for Norton Road in the vicinity of the primary school (both directions), and that the cost estimates for these schemes be reported to the next meeting of the Letchworth Committee on 8 November 2006.

RESOLVED: That the situation in respect of the suggested schemes regarding the conversion of the existing pedestrian crossing (adjacent to Morrison's supermarket) to a pelican crossing on the Broadway and parking regulations along Icknield Way, as detailed above, be noted.

RECOMMENDED TO NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE HIGHWAYS JOINT MEMBER PANEL: That, in respect of the amount of £5,000 previously granted by the Committee from its Area Visioning Budget towards the cost of traffic calming in Norton Road, the matter be referred to the North Hertfordshire Highways Joint Member Panel meeting on 16 October 2006, with a request that the North Herts District Manager (Hertfordshire Highways), in consultation with the NHDC/NHHP Liaison Officer and the HCC Safer Routes to School Officer, be requested to devise and cost various alternative traffic calming and/or traffic management schemes for

Norton Road in the vicinity of the primary school (both directions), and that the cost estimates for these schemes be reported to the next meeting of the Letchworth Committee on 8 November 2006.

REASON FOR DECISION: To update Members on highway issues, and to take steps to attempt to progress a scheme previously identified by the Committee.

49. CHAMPION NEWS

The Community Development Manager presented a report of the Head of Community Development & Cultural Services to the Committee which advised them of the activities undertaken by the Letchworth Garden City Community Development Officer since the last meeting of the Committee held on 16 August 2006. The report also brought to the Committee's attention some important community based activities that would be taking place during the next few months.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the actions taken by the CDO to promote greater community capacity and well-being for Letchworth Garden City communities, as detailed in the report, be endorsed;
- (2) That the Southern Way Landscaping Project in the Visioning Budget be redesignated as an art project, as originally authorized at the meeting of the Committee held on 3 November 2004, the funding remaining unchanged at £3,200.

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

50. ANNUAL GRANTS AND DEVELOPMENT DISCRETIONARY 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 budgetary situation for the Committee. The following appendices were submitted with the report.

Appendix 1 – Grant application from the Grange Baptist Church (see Minute 51 below);
Appendix 2 – Statement of Committee Budgets was attached to the report.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the current expenditure, balances and carry forwards from the Development Budgets and allocated Visioning Budgets be noted;
- (2) That an allocation of £30,000 be made from the Capital Visioning budget for costs associated with establishing a youth facility on the Jackmans Estate.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) The report was intended to apprise Members of the financial resources available to this Committee. It drew attention to the current budgetary situation, assisted in the effective financial management of the Committee's budget and ensured actions were performed within the Authority's Financial Regulations and the guidance contained in the Grants procedure;
- (2) The awarding of financial assistance to voluntary organisations and the use of discretionary spending allowed the Committee to further the aims and strategic priorities of the Council.

51. GRANT APPLICATION – THE GRANGE BAPTIST CHURCH

RESOLVED: That the sum of £1,250 be awarded to the Grange Baptist Church as a financial contribution towards improvements to enable the community hall to be compliant with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

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.

52. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

In respect of planning application 06/00650/1 – 75 Broadway, Letchworth Garden City – the Principal Planning Officer advised that a further letter of objection had been submitted by the occupants of 77 Broadway, stating that a grant of permission would result in overdevelopment of the site and re-iterating the reasons for objection contained in their original letter.

In respect of planning application 06/01265/1 HH – 17 Northfields, Letchworth Garden City – the Principal Planning Officer advised that a late letter had been received from the occupants of 15 Northfields, raising no objections to the proposal.

RESOLVED: To determine the applications as set out in the report of the Head of Planning & Building Control as submitted to the Committee in the following schedule:

SCHEDULE

Reference Number	Description of Development and location	Decision
06/00650/1	75 Broadway, Letchworth Garden City, SG6 3PQ Replacement detached 5 bedroom dwelling with integral garage and 3 car parking spaces (as amended by plans received on 19 July 2006)	GRANTED (as per report)
06/00679/1 CAC	75 Broadway, Letchworth Garden City, SG6 3PQ Demolition of existing house and ancillary outbuildings	GRANTED (see (a) below)
06/01081/1 HH	9 Eastholm Green, Letchworth Garden City, SG6 4TW Installation of 1.75m high driveway gates	GRANTED (as per report)
06/01265/1 HH	17 Northfields, Letchworth Garden City, SG6 4RJ Single storey front and side extensions and two storey rear extension	GRANTED (as per report)
06/01328/1 HH	52 Lytton Avenue, Letchworth Garden City, SG6 3HU Single storey rear extension	GRANTED (as per report)

(a) **RESOLVED:** That, with regard to application reference 06/00679/1CAC, and had the Council been in a position to determine this application, Conservation Area Consent would have been **GRANTED**, as per the conditions detailed in the report, and with the following additional condition:-

3. Any grass verges which are damaged during the course of the works hereby consented shall be reinstated to their former condition within one month of the completion of all associated works, to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure the retention of the grass verge at the front of the site in the interests of visual amenity.

53. PLANNING APPEALS

The Principal Planning Officer informed the Committee that the following four appeals had been lodged since the meeting of the Committee held on 16 August 2006:

Appellant Mr & Mrs Painter
Address 75 Broadway, Letchworth Garden City
Description Replacement detached 5 bedroom dwelling with integral garage and 3 car parking spaces (as amended by plans received on 19 July 2006)
Reference 06/00650/1
Procedure Written representations.

Appellant Mr & Mrs Painter
Address 75 Broadway, Letchworth Garden City
Description Demolition of existing house and ancillary outbuildings
Reference 06/00679/1 CAC
Procedure Written representations.

Appellant O2 UK Ltd.
Address Land at junction of Letchworth Gate and Howard Drive, Letchworth Garden City
Description Swapping out of existing 10m high street lamp with 15m high integrated lamp and telecommunications column
Reference 06/00627/1TD
Procedure Written representations

Appellant T-Mobile UK Ltd.
Address Lamp post No. 240 outside No. 28 Hitchin Road, Letchworth Garden City
Description Replacement 10.06m high dual purpose telecommunications lamp post with 3 antennae, three radio equipment cabinets and ancillary development
Reference 06/01037/1
Procedure Written representations

The meeting closed at 10.25pm

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Chairman