

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

**BALDOCK & DISTRICT COMMITTEE
(Baldock, Arbury and Weston and Sandon Wards)**

**Meeting held at The Knights Templar School, Park Street, Baldock
on 3 July 2006 at 7.30 p.m.**

PRESENT: *Councillors M.E. Weeks (Chairman), A.D. Young (Vice-Chairman), S.K. Jarvis, Marilyn Kirkland, I.J. Knighton and M.R.M. Muir.*

IN ATTENDANCE: *Steve Crowley (Project Manager – Leisure), Tim Stephen (Community Development Manager), Stuart Izzard (Senior Community Development Officer (Youth)) and Donna Levett (Committee & Member Services Officer).*

ALSO PRESENT: *Mr John Inkpen (Inkpen Downie) and 7 members of the public.*

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologised for the change of venue, which was due to the lack of room availability at the Community Centre, and the difficulties that many had experienced in finding the venue.

17. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

18. MINUTES

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

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 22 May 2006 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and signed by the Chairman, subject to the amendment of Minute 14 – Planning Applications (c) to include the following:

The Committee requested that the unauthorised change of use of agricultural land to garden be regularised with an application within 28 days. If the access arrangements and paddock use were to be included in the application, a period of 2 months was considered appropriate.

19. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was submitted for consideration by the Committee.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Committee & Member Services Officer stated that the report relating to the future use or development of the land off Yeomanry Drive, Baldock (to the rear of Hartsfield School) had not been included on the agenda for this meeting as expected, as officers would be presenting it to the Council's Political Liaison Board at its meeting on 12 July 2006. It was therefore expected that this report would instead be included on the agenda for consideration by this Committee at its meeting to be held on 14 August 2006.

The Committee asked that, should a full report not be available for that meeting, an update on the current situation be presented in its place. The Committee also asked that the members of the public who had presented the petition to the meeting of the Committee held on 10 April 2006 be kept informed of the progress of this report, in order that they be able to attend the meeting that any responses would be presented to.

20. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations of interests were made during the meeting.

21. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No items were presented for consideration by the Committee under public participation.

22. REFERRAL FROM NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE HIGHWAYS PARTNERSHIP JOINT MEMBER PANEL – 24 APRIL 2006 – NHHP DISCRETIONARY BUDGET PROJECTS 2007/2008

The Committee considered a referral from the North Hertfordshire Highways Partnership Joint Member Panel which invited proposals for projects which could be funded from the Panel's Discretionary Budget for the financial year 2007/2008. Councillor A.D. Young, who was a member of the Panel, informed the Committee of the reasons this referral had been made to the Area Committees, and highlighted the projects already put forward within the Baldock & District area.

The Committee identified as a priority the scheme identified at paragraph 5(d) of the resolution in Minute 57 of the meeting of the North Hertfordshire Highways Partnership Joint Member Panel held on 24 April 2006 – the provision of a pedestrian phase to the traffic light control at the junction of the A505 and A507 in Baldock. The provision of this crossing had previously been identified as a safety requirement but Highways had stated that it could not be provided until such time as the Bypass had been built and opened because of the volume of traffic using the A505. The Committee felt that, now the Bypass had opened and the volume of traffic using the road had decreased, it was appropriate to install the pedestrian phase to allow safe crossing of what was still a dangerous road.

It was noted however that the cost of such a scheme would be significant and that it was therefore not likely to qualify for full funding from the Joint Member Panel's Discretionary Budget. However the Committee felt that other funding sources could be explored should a suitable scheme be identified for this site.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Hertfordshire Highways be requested to explore appropriate design options and sources of funding to facilitate the provision of a pedestrian phase to the traffic light control at the junction of the A505 and A507 in Baldock;
- (2) That any additional schemes within the Baldock & District area for consideration of funding from the North Hertfordshire Highways Partnership Joint Member Panel's Discretionary Budget for the financial year 2007/2008 be submitted in writing through the Committee & Member Services Officer, or at the meeting of the Committee to be held on 14 August 2006.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure the Panel's Discretionary Budget was allocated for agreed themes to projects that most benefited the Committee's area.

23. NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL'S PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

The Project Manager – Leisure presented the report of the Head of Leisure & Environmental Services to the Committee which informed them of the Cabinet's strategic decision for the Council's public conveniences, and sought their input on the proposed refurbishment project, with particular reference to the Baldock & District area.

Attached to the report of the Head of Leisure & Environmental Services was the report from the consultants Inkpen Downie, titled "A Report on a Possible Strategy for Improvements and Provision of Public Conveniences in North Hertfordshire". Mr Downie was also present and made a brief presentation to the Committee to demonstrate the design potential of the proposed public convenience units.

In response to questions from the Committee the Project Manager (Leisure) confirmed that the predicted timescale for the project was that all works throughout the District would be completed by the end of the current financial year. To this end, the existing public toilet facilities in Baldock High Street would close from the end of March 2007, although the disabled toilet facility would remain available if the new facilities were not in place. He also confirmed that it was unlikely planning permission would be required for the installation of the new facilities, subject to siting and design, and that planning and conservation officers would be involved at all stages of the process to ensure the new facilities were in keeping with the historic nature of the town.

The Committee expressed their great concern that the existing toilet facilities would be closed at the end of March 2007 even if the new toilet facilities were not ready to open, which could leave the town with no public toilet facilities for an unspecified period of time. They also stated that, whilst they supported the installation of new facilities, this should not be finalised and take place until such time as the plans for the regeneration of the town centre under the Baldock Town Centre Strategy were agreed, as these could result in the need to relocate the toilet facilities just months after installation. Further, they expressed the desire for public opportunity to comment on the scheme and asked that, if this would not be provided for under the planning process, some form of consultation through displays in public venues such as the Community Centre be held.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the strategic decision from Cabinet for the North Hertfordshire District Council's Public Conveniences, as stated in paragraph 3.1 of the report of the Head of Leisure & Environmental Services, be noted;
- (2) That alternative sites to that identified in the report of the Head of Leisure & Environmental Services be investigated, in conjunction with the Council's planning control and conservation officers;
- (3) That the public be given the opportunity to comment on the proposed design and location of the new facility for Baldock High Street, through the planning process or a consultation event in the town;
- (4) That a report detailing the finalised proposed design and location of the new facility for Baldock High Street be brought to the meeting of this Committee to be held on either 14 August 2006 or 25 September 2006 for approval by the Committee;
- (5) That implementation of the new facility not be commenced until such time as the Baldock Town Centre Strategy and associated town centre regeneration plans have been completed, to prevent the requirement to relocate facilities subsequent to their installation.

REFERRED TO CABINET: That the existing facilities at Baldock Town Hall be kept open until such time as the new facilities in Baldock High Street are provided.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To ensure delivery of project objectives whilst best serving the needs of the residents of and visitors to Baldock.

24. CHAMPION NEWS

The Senior Community Development Officer (Youth) presented a report of the Head of Community Development & Cultural Services to the Committee, which advised them of the activities undertaken by the Senior Community Development Officer (Youth) since the meeting of the Committee held on 22 May 2006, and brought to their attention some important community based activities that would be taking place during the next few months.

The Committee noted the concerns that continued to be expressed by residents and businesses with regards to parking problems. It was stressed that this issue had been identified as one of the main priorities for the town centre enhancement scheme following the completion of the Bypass, and the Committee expressed their support for the commencement of this work as soon as possible.

With relation to Bypass-related works and questions previously raised by the Committee, the Senior Community Development Officer (Youth) confirmed that the 40 m.p.h. speed limit imposed on the initial section of the A507 would remain permanently as slip roads had been created from it to properties as a result of the relocation of the road. He also informed the Committee that the site office was licensed through the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation until September 2006, and that the Foundation were currently exploring options for potential uses subsequent to that date.

The Committee expressed their concern in relation to the recent closure of the Bypass tunnel for two nights, which had resulted in traffic being directed back through the town. As this would be occurring every three months for maintenance purposes, it was of great concern, and there was some confusion as to why one side of the tunnel could not be closed off each night and traffic be directed through the other side.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report of the Head of Community Development & Cultural Services be noted;
- (2) That the actions taken by the Senior Community Development Officer (Youth) to promote greater community capacity and well-being for communities in the Baldock & District area be endorsed;
- (3) That the Head of Community Development & Cultural Services be requested to contact the Assistant Director of Environment (Hertfordshire County Council) to establish the reason for the complete closure and redirection of traffic from the Bypass every 3 months when testing the tunnel.

REASON FOR DECISION: To keep members of the Committee apprised of the latest developments in community activities in the Baldock & District area.

25. ANNUAL GRANTS AND DEVELOPMENT DISCRETIONARY BUDGET 2004/05

The Senior Community Development Officer (Youth) presented a report of the Head of Community Development & Cultural Services to the Committee, which set out the budgetary situation for the Committee.

The Senior Community Development Officer (Youth) drew the Committee's attention to paragraph 4.1 of the report – the proposal for the development of a grass maze at Avenue Park, Baldock. He informed the Committee that the idea was to mark out the design of the maze and then let the grass grow around it, although maintaining the height so that the children could still be seen inside it. The cost for maintenance of the maze would be £350 per year, and there was no current provision for this within the leisure or grounds maintenance budgets. However, the Senior Community Development Officer (Youth) informed the Committee that, should the trial in Baldock prove successful, it was possible that mazes could be provided in play areas throughout the District too in subsequent years.

With regard to the Small Area Grants Budget, the Committee noted that this was traditionally allocated to one Ward each year. As the previous two financial years had seen it allocated to the rural Wards, suggestion was made that it be allocated to Baldock East Ward for the 2006/2007 financial year.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the budgetary expenditure, balances and carry forwards from the Ward Development Budgets 2005/2006, the Small Area Grants Budget and the allocated Visioning Budgets be noted;
- (2) That the sum of £350 be allocated from the Baldock Wards for the installation and maintenance of a grass maze at Avenue Park, Baldock, such monies to be split as follows:
 - £87.50 from Baldock East Ward
 - £262.50 from Baldock Town Ward
- (3) That the Small Area Grants Budget in the sum of £190 be allocated to the Baldock East Ward for the financial year 2006/2007.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

- (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 allows the Committee to further the aims and strategic priorities of the Council.

26. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

No planning applications were presented for determination by the Committee.

27. PLANNING APPEALS

The Chairman informed the Committee that no planning appeals had been lodged since the meeting of the Committee held on 22 May 2006. However, the Area Planning Officer had tabled details of the following planning appeals which had been determined since the meeting of the Committee held on 22 May 2006:

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| Appellant | Mr Ross and Mr Berwald |
| Reference number | 05/01285/1 and 05/01286/1LB |
| Address | Land Rear of 5 High Street, Baldock |
| Proposal | 7 flats and conversion of retail storage to 1 bed flat |
| Decision | Appeal DISMISSED |

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| Appellant | Green King Plc |
| Reference number | 05/01456/1 |
| Address | Land Adjacent the Former Plough Public House, Wallington |
| Proposal | Two Storey 4-Bed Dwelling with Garage |
| Decision | Appeal DISMISSED |

The meeting closed at 9.07 p.m.

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Chairman