

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

LETCHWORTH COMMITTEE

**Meeting held at Council Offices, Gernon Road, Letchworth Garden City
on 9 November 2005 at 7.30 p.m.**

PRESENT: *Councillors M. Paterson (Chairman), J.M. Cunningham (Vice-Chairman), Simon Bloxham, Gary Grindal, Tony Hartley, T.W. Hone, David Kearns, Lorna Kercher, Alison Kingman, Ian Mantle, Peter Mardell and Lawrence McNamara.*

IN ATTENDANCE: *Community Development Manager, Principal Planning Officer, Senior Tree Officer, Project Co-Ordinator (Community Safety) and Committee and Member Services Officer.*

ALSO PRESENT: *Hugh Harper (Chairman of Letchworth Garden City Town Centre Partnership).*

62. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J.F. Barry and Mrs L.A. Needham.

63. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2005 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and signed by the Chairman.

64. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was submitted for consideration by the Committee.

65. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor Gary Grindal declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 9 – Ivel Court: Progress and Partners Selection - as he was North Hertfordshire District Council's representative on the Board of the Howard Cottage Society. Councillor Grindal stated that he would withdraw from the meeting for the duration of this item.

66. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr Stephen Fitch had given due notice that he wished to speak at the meeting regarding highways issues and traffic management in Norton Road, Letchworth Garden City. Mr Fitch also presented two petitions regarding this problem, from the residents of Norton Road and from Norton St. Nicholas School. More than 500 individuals had signed a petition calling for action to address the excessive speed of traffic in Norton Road.

Mr Fitch made the following key points:

- Norton Road was not just a traffic route in and out of Letchworth Garden City; it was a place where people lived, raised families and often retired;
- Many residents walk along Norton Road to and from St. Nicholas School and there had been several "near misses";
- The noise and pollution disturbed lives;
- The volume and weight of traffic destroyed the road infrastructure;
- Excessive traffic speed intimidated pedestrians, horse riders and cyclists; and
- The speed of traffic provided a constant risk of serious injury.

The Committee were very sympathetic to the concerns raised and requested that the residents present gave very careful consideration to the type of traffic management control measures they would like to see placed in Norton Road. Members suggested various types of traffic management and reference was made to the effectiveness of for example, road humps, vehicle activated signs and pinch points. During this discussion it was proposed and agreed that a solution (notably funding) should be

sought under the County Council's 'Safer Routes to School' programme which would be discussed at the next meeting of the North Hertfordshire Highways Partnership Joint Member Panel, to be held on 30 January 2006.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the formal receipt of the two petitions be confirmed;
- (2) That the two petitions be forwarded to the North Hertfordshire Highways Partnership – Joint Member Panel and the appropriate department within Hertfordshire County Council.

RECOMMENDED TO THE NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE HIGHWAYS PARTNERSHIP JOINT MEMBER PANEL:

- (1) That the North Hertfordshire District Manager of Hertfordshire Highways be requested to review the highways and traffic management issues raised in the two petitions under the 'Safer Routes to School Programme' and present a report to the next meeting of the Joint Member Panel to be held on 30 January 2006;
- (2) That the North Hertfordshire District Manager be requested to consider an amendment to the accident record for Norton Village to include an allowance for the 'near misses' as detailed in the petition from St. Nicholas School, Norton Road.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To ensure that residents' concerns with regard to highways issues and traffic management in Norton Road, Letchworth Garden City, were given consideration to enable implementation of remedial measures accordingly.

67. TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT UPDATE

Mr Hugh Harper, Chairman of the Letchworth Garden City Town Centre Partnership, made an oral presentation to the Committee, which provided an update on events that had taken place in the town centre, and future events.

Mr Harper advised that some progress had been made in the Town Centre revitalisation programme, and highlighted the following events to the Committee, which would take place in the Town Square on Leys Avenue:

- 25 November 2005 – the Christmas lights would be switched on;
- 25/26 November 2005 - an Italian Market;
- 17 December 2005 - a Farmers' Market.

Mr Harper also stated that a competition for the "best dressed" shop window would be running this year, sponsored by the Broadway Hotel. The prize would be a free meal for up to eight persons at the Broadway Hotel.

The Chairman thanked Mr Harper for his attendance and presentation to the Committee.

68. CONSIDERATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF 'ALCOHOL FREE' ZONES ACROSS NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE

The Project Co-Ordinator (Community Safety) presented a report of the Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance to the Committee. This report detailed the policy background to evidencing the need for, and progressing where deemed appropriate, the implementation of alcohol free zones across the District. The purpose of this report was to request the Committee's approval to proceed with consultation with Ward Councillors and the public to ascertain the levels of on-street drinking affecting their local area. He drew particularly drew the Committee's attention to the evidence of events and identified problem areas for Baldock, outlined in paragraphs 4.1 and 4.4.

The Project Co-Ordinator (Community Safety) also advised the Committee of previous discussions held at the following meetings:

- Cabinet: 20 September 2005 (Minute 86 refers) - requested a District-wide assessment of the feasibility of alcohol free zones before the end of the Civic Year 2005/2006;
- Royston & District Committee: 5 October 2005 (Minute 46 refers) – agreed to consultation within the Royston area, as the town centre (and particularly the Priory Memorial Gardens) was an area of particular concern;
- Scrutiny Committee: 11 October 2005 (Minute 69 refers) - requested Cabinet defer the implementation of alcohol free zones to await the effect of the change in the licensing laws and any impact of a Royston Alcohol Free Zone;
- Cabinet: 18 October 2005 (Minute 98 refers) - agreed that each Area Committee would be invited to consider the issue, to ensure parity across the District

There was considerable discussion as to the need for alcohol free zones in Letchworth Garden City and the Committee suggested that implementing a ban in one area of Letchworth Garden City might only disperse the perceived problem to another part of the town. The Committee noted that incidences of under-age drinking were recorded separately by the police to street drinking, and indicated that in the summer months the vast majority of young people congregating at Broadway Gardens fell into this under-age category.

In open debate the Committee were unable to reach a consensus as to either (a) waiting for the implementation of the Royston alcohol free zone or (b) the desire for immediate public consultation in Letchworth Garden City, and following a vote the Committee:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the information provided in the report of the Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance on the feasibility of alcohol free zones be noted;
- (2) That the resolution made by the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on 11 October 2005 (Minute 69 refers) be endorsed by the Letchworth Area Committee;
- (3) That consideration of the request for a grant allocation of £600 for the placement of a Public Notice in the local press be deferred, in accordance with resolution (2) above.

REASONS FOR DECISION: To consider the implementation of alcohol free zones in order to severely restrict the level of on street drinking and the element of antisocial behaviour which was drink related.

69. STREET PLANTING IN LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY

The Senior Tree Officer presented a report of the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services which advised the Committee of the present position on street tree planting in the Garden City, and sought their approval to organise another phase of tree planting during the coming planting season using funds in the Visioning Budget.

The Committee discussed at length the requirements for new tree planting in Letchworth Garden City, the roads which should have new trees or replacement trees, the viability of semi-mature trees against young trees, and the viability of planting trees where vehicles were regularly parked on grass verges. Comment was also made that Councillors received many complaints about tree roots of mature trees in the footway, overhanging branches and fallen branches.

In response to the points raised, the Senior Tree Officer confirmed that the current practice of using young trees was on balance better than using semi-mature trees on grounds of cost versus ongoing maintenance and the longer term stabilisation of semi-mature trees, larger holes and associated problems with utilities services. With regard to the matter of tree roots damaging the footway, it was explained that

footways were the responsibility of Hertfordshire County Council and that funding was never sufficient to meet the demand for pruning.

The Committee next reviewed the amount of grant to be allocated to new tree planting and agreed that more funding should be provided than that requested in the report. It was also considered appropriate that the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation, William Sutton Trust, Howard Cottage Society and North Hertfordshire Homes should be approached for a financial contribution in roads where potential sponsors may have an interest. Hertfordshire Highways, public utilities and residents would be consulted on aspects of the proposed new planting. The replanting of Norton Way South in particular may be subject to objections from residents in view of previous problems experienced in this road.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the sum of £15,000 be allocated from the Committee's Visioning budget for street planting in the following roads:
 - (a) Abbots Road = 16 trees
 - (b) Redhoods Way West = 14 trees
 - (c) Southfields = 15 trees
 - (d) Norton Way South, for gapping up = 6 trees
 - (e) Pixmore Way, for gapping up = 7 trees
 - (f) To fund young tree maintenance and additional watering.
- (2) That should there be any surplus funds after the tree planting works and maintenance in (1) (a) to (f) above, work should commence in Cowslip Hill (22 trees) and Gaunts Way (46 trees).

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To fund and maintain the street planting initiative for Letchworth Garden City.

70. IVEL COURT, LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY – PROGRESS AND PARTNERS SELECTION

The Chairman advised the Committee that unfortunately an officer would not be available to take technical questions and Members agreed that comments on the report to the Letchworth Area Committee and the report to Cabinet for the meeting on 15 November 2005 should be passed to the Strategic Director of Finance and Regulatory Services for consideration.

RESOLVED: That the following comments be forwarded to the Strategic Director of Finance and Regulatory Services for consideration:

- At paragraph 3.2 to the report it was confirmed by a Member that there is **no** elected resident sub-group;
- Why were there no comments on the two failed submissions?
- Why were the comments of the Scrutiny Committee not included in this report?
- Why no member input into these capital development schemes?
- Will Members be able to participate in any subsequent planning applications?
- Why no information on the two failed submissions?
- Insufficient Member involvement;
- The report is incomplete;
- Paragraph 4.2 in the report to Cabinet is inadequate.

REASON FOR DECISION: No more detailed appraisal of the proposal could be made without an officer present. Submission of the comments would therefore put across the Committee's view on the information and proposals within the report.

71. CHAMPION NEWS

The Community Development Officer for Letchworth Garden City presented a report of the Head of Community Development to the Committee, which advised them of the activities undertaken by the Community Development Officer for Letchworth Garden City since the meeting of the Committee held on 28 September 2005, and brought to

their attention some important community based activities that would be taking place during the next few months.

Of particular interest to the Committee were recent developments at The Place, on which the Community Development Manager provided an update. The Committee noted that in order to ensure that Letchworth Garden City retained an Arts Centre and a business plan could be progressed, officers and Members from Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation (LGCHF), NHDC and The Place had formed the Letchworth Garden City Arts Partnership (LGCAP) on 21 October 2005. Membership from NHDC would be two officers and two Members from the Letchworth Committee, one being the Chairman. LGCAP would be responsible for the appointment and employment of an Arts Development Manager.

The Community Development Manager confirmed that the trustees of The Place were aware that funding would not be provided direct to The Place and that NHDC and LGCHF would retain some control over funds, which would be used for carrying forward the business plan. In response to an enquiry about the naming and length of tenure of LGCAP the Manager confirmed that this would not carry any reference to North Herts in its title and that current arrangements would be in place for at least the next year, and hopefully beyond in the event that the project is deemed a success.

The Committee was pleased to receive confirmation that an update report on progress with the appointment of the Arts Development Manager, refurbishment of The Place and progress against the Business Plan would be made at the meeting of the Letchworth Area Committee to be held on 25 January 2005.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report of the Head of Community Development be noted;
- (2) That the actions taken by the Community Development Officer for Letchworth Garden City to promote greater community capacity and well-being for Letchworth Garden City communities be endorsed;
- (3) That the Community Development Manager be requested to present an update report on the development of the Letchworth Garden City Arts Centre at the meeting of the Committee to be held on 25 January 2006;
- (4) That the Labour group on the Letchworth Area Committee be requested to advise the Community Development Manager of their nomination to be the second NHDC member of the LGCAP, no later than 30 November 2005.

REASON FOR DECISION: To keep members of the Committee apprised of the latest developments in community activities in Letchworth Garden City, and approve the actions and policies involved in the tasks and projects undertaken by the Community Development Officer for Letchworth Garden City.

72. ANNUAL GRANTS AND DEVELOPMENT DISCRETIONARY BUDGET 2004/05

The Community Development Officer for Letchworth Garden City presented a report of the Head of Community Development to the Committee, which set out the budgetary situation for the Committee. No grant applications had been presented in the report for consideration by the Committee, but the Community Development Officer for Letchworth Garden City advised that he had two applications to make at the meeting. In response to an enquiry the Community Development Officer for Letchworth Garden City confirmed that unspent funds for the RapAID event at Broadway Gardens would be distributed to the organising group (RapAID) once final accounts had been received.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the current expenditure and balance of the Development Budget be noted;

- (2) That the sum of £500 to cover costs associated with the promotion and production of a carol concert to be held on 17 December 2005 at Broadway Gardens be allocated from the Visioning Budget;
- (3) That, in principle, a grant of £500 as a contribution to start up costs associated with the Grange Regeneration Group be allocated from the Visioning Budget, subject to actual expenditure.

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.

73. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

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

SCHEDULE

| Reference Number | Description of Development and location | Decision |
|-------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| 05/01172/1LB | 100 Ridge Road, Letchworth Garden City Replacement rear conservatory and windows, replacement front door and minor internal alterations (as amended by drawing no. JRR/2A received 12 September 2005). | GRANTED (as per report) |
| 05/01396/1HH | 19 Highfield, Letchworth Garden City Two storey side and rear extension. | GRANTED (as per report) |

74. PLANNING APPEALS

The Principal Planning Officer informed the Committee that the no planning appeals had been lodged or determined since the meeting of the Committee held on 28 September 2005.

The meeting closed at 10.20 p.m.

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Chairman