

**NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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

**Meeting held at The Community Centre, Simpson Drive, Baldock.  
on 23 January 2006 at 7.30 p.m.**

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

**IN ATTENDANCE:** *Projects Manager (Planning Policy), Area Planning Officer, Community Development Officer (Baldock Area and Youth) and Committee and Member Services Officer.*

**ALSO PRESENT:** *Station Officer Ian McKenzie, Hertfordshire Fire Service.*

**85. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor A.D. Young.

**86. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2005 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and signed by the Chairman.

**87. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS**

No other business was submitted for consideration by the Committee.

**88. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Councillor M.R.M. Muir declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 7 – Baldock Town Hall Feasibility Study – Consultants Brief – as he was Chairman of the Community Association when the Town Hall had been re-opened. Councillor Muir reserved his right to speak and vote in this matter.

Councillor I.J. Knighton declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 7 – Baldock Town Hall Feasibility Study – Consultants Brief – as he was North Hertfordshire District Council's representative to the Baldock Youth & Community Association who were users of the Town Hall. Councillor Knighton reserved his right to speak and vote in this matter.

Councillor M.E. Weeks declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 7 – Baldock Town Hall Feasibility Study – Consultants Brief – as he was North Hertfordshire District Council's representative to the Baldock Youth & Community Association who were users of the Town Hall. Councillor Weeks reserved his right to speak and vote in this matter.

Councillor Marilyn Kirkland declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 8 – Champion News – as she was a member of the Baldock Festival Committee. Councillor Kirkland reserved her right to speak and vote in this matter.

**89. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

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

**90. FIRE SERVICE UPDATE**

Station Officer Ian McKenzie of Letchworth & Baldock Fire Station apologised to the Committee for not attending the December meeting as planned, but explained that he and other firefighters from his station had been attending the incident at the Buncefield fuel storage depot in Hemel Hempstead.

Station Officer McKenzie then made an oral presentation to the Committee, giving information about the Station and how it runs. Key points raised were:

- The Station had two appliances (fire engines), 1 “whole time” and 1 retained (part time), and its turn out area covered Baldock, Letchworth Garden City and many of the surrounding villages. Firefighters worked in 4 shifts to cover each 24 hour period.
- The Station handled about 500 calls per year, although they were working to reduce that number through fire-prevention and community safety and awareness events.
- The Station had quite a lot of local freedom to target their campaigns at the more “at risk” groups within their area, rather than just meeting corporate goals. They also had a performance management system that provided Best Value Performance Indicators which they could use to target resources at problem areas.
- Regular training exercises took place, not just on site but also at other locations such as swimming pools, schools and so on. An exercise was planned for the beginning of February in the new tunnel on the Baldock Bypass.
- Firefighters attended a lot of different types of incidences, from special services (such as cutting wildlife free from fences) to vehicle collisions, house fires, and also community safety events. They also held an annual Open Day in May, usually in the middle of the Baldock Festival. The next Open Day would be on 13 May 2006.
- As well as the work they did when on duty, the Firefighters got involved in a lot of charity events, including charity car washes, and a team was also doing a sponsored walk along Hadrian’s Wall in 2006.

In response to a question from the Committee, Station Officer McKenzie confirmed that premises applying for alcohol and entertainment licences were inspected by the Fire Authority, and any that were of real concern would be objected to. However, he stated that as most applications were submitted well in advance of the determination date, any problems could usually be remedied by direct negotiation between the applicant and the Fire Authority, without the need for the application to go to a formal hearing.

Station Officer McKenzie also confirmed that firefighters were not limited to working purely within Hertfordshire, and frequently attended incidences outside the County’s borders. He stated that this was particularly the case with Royston Fire Station, whose area covered a large area of South Cambridgeshire. Agreements between the Fire Authorities meant that payment was made for each cross-border call-out. He also informed the Committee that Letchworth & Baldock Fire Station was a “pin” Station, which meant that if the principal appliance is called out and will be gone for 20 minutes or more, another appliance will move to cover the Station.

The Committee expressed their support for the work of the firefighters, and their congratulations for the excellent fundraising they undertook in their own time too. The Chairman thanked Station Officer McKenzie for attending and for his presentation to the Committee, and for agreeing to come and speak again in 12 months time.

**91. BALDOCK TOWN HALL FEASIBILITY STUDY – CONSULTANT’S BRIEF**

The Projects Manager (Planning Policy) presented a report of the Head of Planning and Building Control to the Committee, which had been requested by the Committee at its meeting on 12 December 2005. The Projects Manager (Planning Policy) stated that the programme set out in the Brief accorded with that in the Action Plan which Members had agreed at the December meeting, and which had subsequently been agreed by Full Council on 19 January 2006.

The Committee expressed their support for this Feasibility Study, and for the improvement of the Town Hall. They also expressed a preference, where possible for

retention of the property for community use for leisure purposes, but acknowledged the need for an unconstrained Brief to allow the Consultants to carry out the Study properly.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the report of the Head of Planning and Building Control be noted;
- (2) That paragraph 1.2 of the Consultants Brief be amended to read:  
*“The Council wishes to establish and identify if it is possible, an appropriate, sustainable and cost efficient use for Baldock Town Hall that meets the needs of the local community and will contribute to the viability and vitality of the Baldock town centre.”*
- (3) That officers be requested to proceed with the appointment of consultants to undertake a detailed feasibility study of the Baldock Town Hall.

**REASON FOR DECISIONS:** To enable Council officers to appoint consultants to undertake a feasibility study of the Baldock Town Hall and to recommend to Members the most cost efficient and sustainable option for the Town Hall that will meet the needs of the local community and contribute to the viability and the vitality of the town centre. Such a study will seek to meet the aims of the adopted Baldock Town Centre Strategy, and in doing so will contribute towards achieving the Council’s strategic objectives.

**REASON FOR DECISIONS:** To enable Council officers to appoint consultants to undertake a feasibility study of the Baldock Town Hall and to recommend to Members the most cost efficient and sustainable option for the Town Hall that will meet the needs of the local community and contribute to the viability and the vitality of the town centre. Such a study will seek to meet the aims of the adopted Baldock Town Centre Strategy, and in doing so will contribute towards achieving the Council’s strategic objectives.

**92. CHAMPION NEWS**

The Community Development Officer for Baldock presented a report of the Head of Community Development and Cultural Services to the Committee, which advised them of the activities undertaken by the Community Development Officer for Baldock since the meeting of the Committee held on 12 December 2005, and brought to their attention some important community based activities that would be taking place during the next few months.

With regard to the Baldock Bypass Community Event (paragraph 4.2.2), the Community Development Officer for Baldock informed the Committee that about £15,500 profit had been raised for local charities.

With regard to the works on the Baldock Bypass itself (paragraph 4.3.2), the Community Development Officer for Baldock informed the Committee that works were being carried out on trees on the Letchworth Garden City side of the Letchworth Gate roundabout over the next few weeks, which could provoke calls from members of the public. These works could look quite harsh initially, but all trees would be reinstated once the footpath to the Pegasus crossing was complete. In response to questions from the Committee, the Community Development Officer for Baldock stated that the current indication for opening of the Bypass was March 2006, and that draft copies of the brown signs which would be erected for Baldock had been produced and would be circulated to Members as soon as possible for feedback prior to the signs being produced and erected, in preparation for the Bypass opening.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the report of the Head of Community Development and Cultural Services be noted;

- (2) That the actions taken by the Community Development Officer for Baldock to promote greater community capacity and well-being for Baldock communities be endorsed;
- (3) That copies of the draft designs for the brown signs for Baldock be circulated to all Members of the Baldock & District Committee for feedback as soon as possible.

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

**93. BALDOCK & DISTRICT AREA COMMITTEE DEVELOPMENT & AREA VISIONING BUDGETS 2005/2006**

The Community Development Officer for Baldock presented a report of the Head of Community Development and Cultural Services to the Committee, which set out the budgetary situation for the Committee, together with 1 additional grant application that had been received.

**RESOLVED:** That the current expenditure and balance of the Development Budget be noted.

**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.

**94. GRANT APPLICATION – NORTH HERTS KNIGHTS BASKETBALL CLUB**

**RESOLVED:** That the sum of £500 be awarded to the North Herts Knights Basketball Club as a financial contribution toward the purchase of an electronic scoreboard, such funding to be allocated as follows:

- £120 from Baldock East Ward Development Budget
- £380 from Baldock Town Ward Development Budget

**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.

**95. 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
05/01732/1	Land rear of Community Centre, Simpson Drive, Baldock Extension to existing car park to provide 6 additional parking bays; erection of brick retaining wall and steel perimeter fencing	GRANTED (see (a) below)

- (a) **RESOLVED:** That, with regard to planning application reference 05/01732/1, planning permission be **GRANTED**, subject to standard conditions and conditions requiring the applicant to submit landscaping details for prior approval. The approval should also be subject to a tree protection condition.

**96. PLANNING APPEALS**

The Area Planning Officer informed the Committee that the following planning appeals had been lodged since the meeting of the Committee held on 12 December 2005:

Appellant	Mr N. Ross and Ms N. Berwald
Reference number	05/01285/1 and 05/01286/1LB
Address	Land to rear of 5 High Street, Baldock
Proposal	Two storey new building; re-roofing and re-cladding of existing two storey extension and conversion of existing ground floor store to form 4 two-bedroom flats and 4 one-bedroom flats. Demolition of existing garage.
Method	Written representations
Appellant	Mr G. Dear
Reference number	05/01588/1HH
Address	12 Barley Rise, Baldock
Proposal	First floor side extension
Method	Written representations

The meeting closed at 8.36 p.m.

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Chairman