

PLEASE NOTE

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- You may also report issues to your local ward Councillor (contact details are on the NHDC website)

The Chair, Councillor Gary Grindal, welcomed everybody to the Town Talk

Present-

- Cllr Gary Grindal (chair)
- Cllr Mike Rice
- Cllr Terry Hone (also representing Herts County Council and LGCHF Board)
- Cllr Helen Oliver
- Cllr Daniel Allen
- Cllr Ian Mantle
- Cllr David Levett
- Claire Morgan (notes) – Community Development Officer

Issued raised this session

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|---|---|-------------------------|
| 1. Letchworth Cycling Strategy | - | Julia Sonander |
| 2. Improvements to plastic recycling | - | Diane Ketcher |
| 3. Waste collection in flats | - | Yasmin Patterson |
| 4. Recycling | - | Luke Boulter |
| 5. Verge Parking | - | Yasmin Patterson |
| | - | John Sharman |
| 6. Town Centre Retail Regeneration | - | Yasmin Patterson |

1. Letchworth Cycling Strategy

JS explained that "the LGCHF have produced a first draft of a Letchworth Cycling Strategy with minimal engagement with the local community. Their recent online survey on the recommendations from this strategy had a few closed questions and one 'anything else' question and it appears that not all responses sent have been published" JS was disappointed by the quality of the strategy and the evident lack of local knowledge by the authors. JS asked how this Strategy will influence the local planning process and asked whether it will feed into the North Central Growth and

transport plan currently being produced by HCC. She asked whether NHDC has appointed a Councillor / Officer to oversee this activity and what the Committee considered to be the key transport schemes they would like to see in the 'Growth and Transport' plan, given the Council's objective is to see a modal shift to a more sustainable transport?

Cllr TH was disappointed that JS was unhappy with the quality of the LGCHF's Cycling Strategy. He agreed to pass on JS's comments to the board of governors. JS asked whether NHDC has a transport officer who can participate in this kind of consultation.

Cllr TH explained that as Executive Member for Planning and transport Cllr David Levett would be in a better position to answer that question. (*Cllr Levett was not present at this point in the meeting.*)

Cllr GG agreed to put this issue on the agenda of the forthcoming joint Boards meeting between the Letchworth Committee and the LGCHF Board.

**Following the meeting these questions were raised with officers at the LCGHF by Cllr TH in his role as member of their Board an extract of the response is outlined below:*

"We appointed a specialist team to lead on this strategy who initially undertook a cycle around the town with local stakeholders, including Julia and our own Chief Executive. They then drafted their initial strategy in order to use this as a starting point for consultation. We have had a really positive community engagement exercise, with over 200 respondents to the on line vote and over 100 written comments. We have also had a number of positive responses welcoming the draft strategy and the opportunity to be involved.

The County and District Council have both allocated Officers to this project and we have spent some time with them reviewing all of these comments, discussing how we should revise the strategy and how this will link into emerging District and County Council documents, ensuring that proposals are deliverable, proportionate and realistic.

There will be a follow up session on 2nd October, where the 90 people who registered their interest have been invited to discuss their thoughts and we will present our revised ideas in response to representations. We are hoping that this will also be attended by NHDC and HCC staff, who have indicated a willingness to support this session.

After that we hope to be able to finalise our proposals in a revised document"

2. Improvements to plastic recycling

DK asked "in the light of the Councils decision to support Plastic Free Letchworth, is it likely / possible that attention will be given to providing separate recycling provisions for the growing volume of bio plastics and hard plastic in this area?"

DK explained that this currently has to go to landfill or incineration despite bio degradable plastic products such as Vegware claiming to be 100% compostable – (under industrial conditions)

As Vegware requires specialist recycling DK would like to see a local recycling site that could accommodate this. As Letchworth is a pioneering town perhaps this could be supported?

Cllr TH explained that across the County 35,000 tons of waste is collected and 11% of this goes to landfill. Kerbside collections are undertaken by different contractors and not always dealt with appropriately as there are not the facilities to do so.

At the 4 main HCC office sites, single use plastic is discouraged and they no longer use plastic cups or cutlery.

There is no provision in the UK to recycle hard plastics and these are sent abroad.

3. Recycling in flats

YP asked how mixed recycling works as she has recently moved back to the area from London. She explained that it is difficult to recycle in flats with communal bins as not all residents recycle appropriate items and it can often end up contaminated.

Cllr TH explained that Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) is undertaking a pilot project which they believe will encourage better recycling in flats with communal bins. If the pilot works then the system may be trialled in North Herts.

4. Recycling

LB explained that he lived for many years in the Netherlands where if people don't recycle correctly they are fined up to 500 euro. In cases where the bins are communal if they are contaminated each flat could have to pay 500 euro each. This makes residents ensure that no contamination happens.

Cllr TH explained that where contamination of truck load of recycling it costs the authority £1200 to dispose of the load which then has to go into landfill.

5. Verge Parking

YP said that she approved of the Heritage Foundation policy that 75% of the footprint of buildings be green space and that grass verges on most of the roads around Letchworth help to make the town an attractive place to live. She asked whether the large properties around Broadway and Sollershott East who are having extensive building works carried out have permission to use the verges outside of their properties to use as parking for contractors and storage for building waste (skips) and materials?

Cllr GG replied that he was not clear whether planning applications specified that any damage to communal areas should be put back to good condition if they were damaged during any building work.

Cllr TH responded that the verges are the responsibility of the County Council not NHDC as they come under the Highway's authority. He added that it is expected that residents will make good any damage they cause to the verges outside of their property. However, legally they don't have to and HCC can not enforce them to do so.

YP asked whether it is possible to change the regulations. She added that Broadway is one of the main routes into the town and acts as an attractive gateway with vista along to the fountain and gardens at the end. It seems a shame that residents are digging up the verges with contractors vehicles and have no responsibility to put it right.

Cllr MR added that there was also an issue with overhanging hedges that block pathways.

Cllr TH recommended that if this is reported to HCC they will be cut and residents are charged for the work.

Cllr IM commented that there used to be a Bi-law regarding verge parking but HCC rescinded it as it was unenforceable.

John Sharman asked: Why the parking on the verge was able to be enforced at Howard Park and at the Letchworth Open air swimming pool?

Cllr DL explained that the area has double yellow lines and therefore is covered by a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) He added that parking enforcement is now also in place outside the Platform Public House on Eastcheap and along Leys Avenue.

Cllr DA added that residents had reported to him that the disabled spaces along Eastcheap are unrestricted from 5.30pm.

It was pointed out that blue badge holders can park anywhere.

6. Town Centre Retail Regeneration

YP explained that she was disappointed that NHDC Planning had allowed planning permission to extend the out of town retail areas off Avenue One.

Cllr GG agreed that there was a need to support the Town Centre.

Cllr DA said that he thought the rates in the Town Centre were too high and asked if anything can be done at a District level to alleviate this?

Cllr GG responded that different parts of the Town Centre are owned by different land owners.

Cllr HO stated that she was aware of a number of emerging ethical businesses and that there may be grants available from central government to encouraging collaborative working. She is hoping to work to encourage these businesses to work together and this ethos fits perfectly with the original Garden City principles.

She also mentioned that the existence of the Letchworth Business Improvement District (BID) goes a long way to improve and maintain the vibrancy of the Town Centre.

Cllr DL explained that he is the NHDC representative on the BID board. He also has business premises in Garden Square Shopping Centre (GSSC).

He added that the GSSC encourage pop up shops in their empty units and have three independent pop up shops at the moment.

He also added that the issue of business rates doesn't seem to worry the landlords who seem to want to keep their units empty despite still having to pay business rates. The BID is up for renewal in November and their business plan and objectives will be voted on in November.

The BID supports nearly all the Town Centre events each year. There has been a shift in use of the Town Centre which is gradually moving over from retail to more leisure activities such as coffee shops, bars and restaurants. The measured footfall is up in the last 18 months but it now tends to be more in the evenings encouraging the night time economy.

Cllr Grindal thanked everyone for attending the Town Talk.

Meeting closed at 19.15

Next meeting: Wednesday 5th December 6.30pm