

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

HITCHIN COMMITTEE

Meeting held at Benslow Music Trust, Benslow Lane, Hitchin,
on 13 December 2005 at 7.30 p.m.

PRESENT: *Councillors; Judi Billing (Chairman), Derek Sheard (Vice-Chairman)
Alison Ashley, David Billing, Paul Clark, Joan Kirby,
Lawrence Oliver, Deepak Sangha, R. Shakespeare – Smith,
Martin Stears and Sarah Wren.*

IN ATTENDANCE: *Head of Financial Services, Head of Strategy and Support Services,
Head of Community Development and Cultural Services, Service
Manager – Grounds Maintenance, Principal Planning Officer, Senior
Planning Officer, Transport Planning Officer, Community
Development Officer and Committee Administrator.*

Hertfordshire Highways: Assistant District Manager (Hitchin)

88. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, and thanked all who attended the Town Talk. The Chairman welcomed Councillor Michael Paterson the Chairman of Letchworth Area Committee. The Chairman also offered seasons greetings to all present and every best wish for 2006.

89. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R.A.C. Thake and Sandra Lunn.

90. MINUTES – 8 November 2005

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2005 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

91. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was tabled.

92. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Agenda Item 8 – Planning Applications

05/01421/1 – Land at Hine Way, Hitchin (North Hertfordshire Homes)

Councillor Mrs Joan Kirby declared a personal interest as a Board Member of North Hertfordshire Homes appointed by North Hertfordshire District Council and confirmed that she would remain for this item, take part in the debate and vote.

Councillor Martin Stears declared a personal interest in that a member of his immediate family resided in a dwelling to the rear of the proposed works and that he would remain for this item, take part in the debate and vote.

93. IMPLEMENTATION PLANS FOR THE MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES BEST VALUE FUNDAMENTAL SERVICE REVIEW

The Head of Strategy and Support Services (HSSS) reminded the Committee that Cabinet at its meeting held on 23 August 2005 (Minute 66 (6) refers) had resolved *inter alia* that the Area Committees should be consulted in the formulation of and recommending proposals for the Museum and Galleries Service.

The HSSS referred the Committee to Appendix A which included the proposed changes to the Improvement Plan – Improvement Table for the North Hertfordshire Heritage and Cultural Service. The plan included aims for significant improvements e.g. Improved access for those with poor mobility and young children; Increased use of technology for greater access to all artefacts; Increased local/mobile displays to improve rural access and reduce manual handling for staff. The Committee noted that a project board had been set up, had its first meeting on 16 November 2005 where the PRINCE 2 methodology had been introduced. The HSSS confirmed that responsibility for Project Assurance would be undertaken by the Performance, Audit and Review Committee and that officers had met with representatives of: Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation, North Herts Arts Council, Hitchin Forum, Friends

of Hitchin Museums and Letchworth Garden City Town Council. Several representatives from these local partnership bodies had indicated a willingness to take part in the proposed Heritage & Culture /Museums & Galleries Forum the membership of which would be open and the first meeting had been arranged for 30 January 2006. Consultation over a five-year period with as many groups and individuals as possible via the Forum would provide invaluable input to the project plans at all stages. Identifying key issues and addressing specific concerns raised by stakeholder groups and communities and these would be passed to Project Board to assist in decision making.

In conclusion the HSSS confirmed that the Area Committees would be consulted at key stages of the project plan and consultation plans would require reinforcement at specific meetings with the partners proposed in the programme of works.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the information provided in the report be noted;
- (2) That Members of the Committee be requested to forward any comments and suggestions on the Implementation Plans for Museums and Galleries in North Hertfordshire to the Head of Strategy and Support Services as soon as possible.
- (3) That confirmation of the first meeting of the Heritage and Culture/Museums and Galleries Forum to be held on Monday 30 January 2006 commencing at 6.30 p.m. in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Gernon Road, Letchworth Garden City be noted to which all members of the Hitchin Committee were invited.

94. HERTFORDSHIRE HIGHWAYS - INTEGRATED WORKS PROGRAMME 2006/2007 AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2007/2011

The Assistant District Manager - Hertfordshire Highways (ADM) advised the Committee that following the meeting of the North Hertfordshire Highways Joint Member Panel (JMP) held on 17 October 2005 the Integrated Works Programme (IWP) for 2006/2007, and the Forward Works Programme (FWP) for 2007/2011, as presented at Appendix A was before the Committee for comments and suggestions.

The Committee noted that the IWP was a detailed look at the year ahead whilst the FWP was a framework for future development and that the FWP would transfer into the IWP for the year 2007/2008 which would be presented to the JMP at its meeting on 30 January 2006 and then to the Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) Highways and Transport Panel in early March 2006 and then to the HCC Cabinet for final endorsement towards the end of March 2006.

The ADM provided a detailed description of the Categories of Schemes and Prioritisation which addressed: Carriageway refurbishment, Footway and Cycleway Refurbishment, Drainage Schemes, Accident Reduction Schemes, Integrated Transport Projects, Traffic and Environmental Issues and Discretionary Schemes.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the information provided in the report be noted;
- (2) That the North Herts District Manager Hertfordshire Highways be requested to take note of the following comments and suggestions which should be reviewed by the North Hertfordshire Highways Partnership at its meeting to be held on 30 January 2006:
 - (a) Resurfacing at Westmill Road and Hampden Road;
 - (b) That the format and presentation of items in the Integrated Works Programme is inadequate and should be expanded with more information e.g. ITP06107 Station Car Park Link;

- (c) With reference to (b) above an update on the proposals for the pedestrian footway between Hitchin Station via the underpass and North Herts College (including Cooks Way and Common Rise) is required as soon as possible;
- (d) Clarification is required on the effects of changes at Paynes Park Roundabout to the one way system at Old Park Road and Bedford Road, Hitchin;
- (e) Advance notice should be provided on road works and road closures in Hitchin. e.g. Stotfold Road , Brand Street, Nightingale Road at Starlings Bridge.
- (f) As a matter of urgency, unnecessary road signs should be removed throughout the District, and details of the number of signs and record of removal should be provided to the Hitchin Committee;
- (g) An update is required on ITP08018 – Hitchin Rail Crossing and provided to the Hitchin Committee as soon as possible;
- (h) Remedial works to the speed restriction features in Whitehill Road which are breaking up;
- (i) Resurfacing in The Avenue and Chiltern Road;
- (j) Consideration to be given to the re-classification of the commercial vehicle route currently using Verulum Road and Queen Street (B656) into Whinbush Road to the alternative routing of Fishponds Road and Nightingale Road ((A602, A505) into Whinbush Road;
- (k) That remedial works to repair the footway paving slabs in High Street, Hitchin be implemented as soon as possible due to three pedestrians suffering falls recently.

95. HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL – REVIEW OF HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE STRATEGY

The Assistant District Manager - Hertfordshire Highways presented a report on the current review of the Highway Maintenance Strategy. He commented that County Council Members had indicated that they wished for an improvement in the condition of the highways across the county, and that the report set out what could be achieved in an enhanced spend scenario and how it could be delivered. The Draft Enhanced Maintenance Potential Programme List for North Hertfordshire was attached as Appendix A to the report.

The Committee noted the four Best Value Performance Indicators that were applicable to the maintenance of the public highway and although caution should be made when looking at the results it was clear that despite the current level of spend on highway works could not match the deterioration due to traffic, weather and time. The consequence of this would be a failure to meet the BVPI and Local Transport Plan 2 targets. The ADM described the outputs and outcomes from alternative budgets and linked this to a proposed maintenance strategy for enhanced spend. This strategy would address the following: Public concern, The Performance Indicators, Asset Management, Carriageway strategy, A roads, B, C and unclassified roads, Footway objectives, High and Medium use footways, Low use footways and the Footway Strategy.

The ADM next described the proposed procurement options and programme for delivery of the enhanced spend of which Option 1 provided new contracts alongside HH arrangements, Option 2 via existing HH contracts or Option 3 via a Private Finance initiative. The Committee noted that Option 1 provided the best opportunity for timely and effective delivery as Option 2 gave the swiftest delivery but would not test the market for a significant increased level of spend and Option 3 was not a viable short term alternative as the lead time could be years rather than months.

The ADM referred the Committee to Appendix A which contained the first draft list of the carriageways that could be part of the Enhanced Maintenance Programme and if the programme went ahead then works could take place on most of the roads in the

list, although no detailed design had been produced. The Committee noted that a list of potential footway works was under preparation.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the proposal for a local enhanced programme of highway maintenance be agreed;
- (2) That the following comments and suggestions be forwarded to the North Herts District Manager and any additional points no later than 31 December 2005
 - (a) That the list of footways to be included in the enhanced spend be provided to the Hitchin Committee as soon as possible;
 - (b) That the pedestrian footway link between Hitchin Station and North Herts college via the underpass under the east coast main line be included in the enhanced programme as a matter of priority (ITP 06107);
 - (c) That Wedmore Road and Aston View should be included in the enhanced programme as these carriageways were next to roads on the enhanced list attached at Appendix A;
 - (d) That Hampden Road should be included in the enhanced programme as this carriageway was next to roads on the enhanced list attached at Appendix A;
 - (e) That Florence Street and Kings Road should be included in the enhanced programme as these carriageways were next to roads on the enhanced list attached at Appendix A;
- (3) That the comments and suggestions raised at (2) (a) to (e) be noted by the North Herts District Manager – Hertfordshire Highways for further discussion with the Strategic Client officers of Hertfordshire Highways as part of a formal feedback to the Transport Panel of Hertfordshire County Council.

96. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Committee heard oral presentations as follows:

Application Ref. 05/ 01626/1HH – 6 Grovelands Avenue, Hitchin SG4 0QT

Mrs E. Ables spoke as the applicant.

Application Ref. 05/01392/1 – 30 and 31 Victoria Road, Hitchin SG5

Mr R.K. Rees spoke as an objector.

Mr Easton spoke as the applicant's representative.

Application Ref. 05/01506/1 Telecommunications Mast by terraces at Hitchin Football Ground, Fishponds Road, Hitchin SG5

Mrs P. Cherry spoke as an objector.

Application Ref. 05/01297/1HH – 67 Hampden Road, Hitchin SG4 0LB

Mr V. Kirk spoke as the objectors' representative.

Mr D. Camilleri spoke as the applicant.

RESOLVED to determine the planning applications as set out in the report of the Planning Control and Conservation Manager and as indicated in the following schedule:

Reference Number	SCHEDULE	
	Description of Development and Location	Decision
05/01626/1HH	6 Grovelands Avenue, Hitchin SG4 0QT Single storey front extension.	Conditional Permission (see (a) below)

05/01392/1	Land at 30 and 31 Victoria Road, Hitchin SG5 Three storey building comprising 4 two bedroom flats and 1 one bedroom flat and six parking spaces following demolition of existing dwellings as amended by drawings as amended by drawing nos. VIC/05/1B and VIC/05/2A received 17/11/2005.	Refused (see (b) below)
05/01506/1	Telecommunications Mast by terraces at, Hitchin Town Football Ground, Fishponds Road, Hitchin, SG5 Retention of 16m modular lattice mast with 3 no. antennas, 2 no. 300mm dishes and associated equipment for a period of six months.	Refused (see (c) below)
05/01297/1	67 Hampden Road, Hitchin SG4 0LB Single storey side extension to provide single garage and shower room together with alterations to existing garage to facilitate use as study and utility room as amended by plans received 1 November 2005.	Refused (see (d) below)
05/01421/1	1 and 2-124(evens) and 9-19 (odd), 25-31 (odd), and 33-63 (odd), Hine Way, Hitchin SG5 External repairs and replacement brick cladding. Side entrance canopy.	Conditional Permission (as per report)
05/01334/1	Walsworth Community Centre, Woolgrove Road, Hitchin SG4 0AU Single storey rear extension. Side entrance canopy.	Conditional Permission (as per report)

- (a) **RESOLVED:** That with regard to Planning Application reference 05/01626/1HH permission be **GRANTED** as per the following reasons: The Committee considered the extension would not be so out of keeping with the existing property or pair of semi-detached properties of which No. 6 forms part as to cause any material harm to the appearance of the street scene, and the proposal is thus acceptable within the provisions of Policy 28 of the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No. 2 with Alterations.

Subject to the following conditions:

- (1) The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with the provision of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

- (2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out wholly in accordance with the details hereby specified in the application and supporting, approved documents and plans, or with minor modifications of those details which have previously been agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority as being not materially different from those hereby permitted.

- (3) Details and/or samples of materials to be used on all external elevations and the roof of the development hereby permitted shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before the development is commenced.

Reason: To ensure that the development will have an acceptable appearance which does not detract from the appearance and character of the surrounding area.

(b) That with regard to planning application reference 05/01392/1 that permission be **REFUSED** for the following reason:

(1) As a consequence of the inadequacy of the parking provision to serve the requirements of the proposal the application would result in an overdevelopment of the site. The development would therefore be contrary to Policies 55 and 57 of the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No. 2 with Alterations.

(c) That with regard to planning application reference 05/01506/1 that permission be **REFUSED** for the following reason:

(1) The applicant had failed to satisfactorily demonstrate the need for the retention of the mast for a further six-month period. The development is therefore contrary to Policy 48 (Telecommunications Apparatus) of the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No. 2 with Alterations.

RESOLVED: That the Planning Control and Conservation Manager, subject to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services being satisfied with the evidence, be authorised to take whatever enforcement action is necessary to secure the permanent removal of the telecommunications mast from the Hitchin Town Football Club ground. The period for compliance to be 2 months.

(d) That with regard to planning application reference 05/01297/1HH that permission be **REFUSED** for the following reasons:

(1) The proposed development, by reason of its design and appearance would be out of character with other properties in Hampden Road to the detriment of the street scene. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy 57 of the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No. 2 with Alterations.

(2) By reason of its excessive height and siting along the common boundary, the proposal would unduly dominate the adjoining property at No.65 Hampden Road and would not be well related to the levels of that property. The proposal would therefore be contrary to Policy 28 of the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No. 2 with Alterations.

RESOLVED: That the Planning Control and Conservation Manager, subject to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services being satisfied with the evidence, be authorised to take whatever enforcement action is necessary to secure the removal of unauthorised building work from the property. The period for compliance to be 2 months.

97. PLANNING APPEALS

The Principal Planning Officer confirmed that two appeals had been lodged since the meeting of this Committee held on 8 November 2005.

Appellant	Nelgus Holdings.
Address	37-38 Queen Street, Hitchin.
Description	Use of land for the open display of cars for sale following the demolition of cottages. Ref. 05/01011/1
Procedure	Written representations.

Appellant	Michael Shanly Homes
Address	Land at 15,17 and 19 Old Hale Way
Description	4 semi-detached and 8 terrace dwellings with new vehicular access. Ref. 05/01268/1
Procedure	Written representations.

98. DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT: VEHICLE PROVISION AT NEW DEVELOPMENT AND ASSOCIATED SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL AND

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The Transport Planning Officer (TPO) advised the Committee that Cabinet at its meeting held on 15 November 2005 (Minute 118 refers) had requested that the five Area Committees review the Draft Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) with specific reference to the Vehicle Parking Provision at New Development. The Committee noted that there would be a six-week period of consultation from 25 November 2006 to 6 January 2007.

The TPO confirmed that the central theme of the draft SPD was that parking policy should influence car use and not ownership. He provided a detailed description of the background to vehicle provision at new development with cross references to national, regional and strategic policy, the Hertfordshire Structure Plan Policy 25, Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 – Transport, Planning Policy Guidance 3 – Housing and the NHDC Car Parking Strategy 2004. The TPO provided information on the elements of Non residential development and restraint zones, Residential development and ‘problem parking’ locations. The Committee noted that the draft SPD would require a developer to provide evidence that parking provision would be sufficient through the preparation of Transport Assessment for large sites or a Transport Statement for small sites and the experience gained by this authority in the planning and implementation of Controlled Parking Zones (CPZ) would be invaluable.

Of particular concern was where parking provision was above the PPG3 level (1.5 spaces) at about 1.8 spaces per dwelling and although this reflected an approach towards compliance and recognition of the small town and rural character of the district it was anticipated that developers would reduce the spaces available to the PPG3 level.

In conclusion the TPO wished to emphasise the effect of the under provision of parking at a new development on local amenity and safety. The TPO stated that there was sufficient policy in the NDHC local plan to support a request for additional parking or the refusal of planning permission where there was a confirmed amenity and/or safety problem.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the information presented in the report and the Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance on Vehicle Parking Provision at New Development be noted;
- (2) That the Transport Planning Officer be requested to take note of the following comments and suggestions for incorporation in his report to Cabinet at the meeting to be held on 28 February 2006;
 - (a) That the draft planning guidance should include policies on public transport;
 - (b) That the draft planning guidance should make reference to and incorporate the outcomes of the Transport Best Value Fundamental Service Review, the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group: and the Member Working Group: Public Transport;
 - (c) That consideration should be made to consider zoning Hitchin Station and its environs;
 - (d) That consideration should be made to the definition of non- residential as to the inclusion or not of business and commercial premises, and the lack of public transport provision in the Hitchin Industrial Area as this area is outside residential zones.
- (3) That members of the Hitchin Committee be requested to forward any further comments or suggestions in writing or via email to planning.policy@north-herts.gov.uk on the above draft policy to the Transport Planning Officer no later than the close of the consultation period on 6 January 2006.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

To allow the Hitchin Committee contribute to the preparation of a Draft

Supplementary Planning Guidance on Vehicle Parking Provision at New Development prior to adoption by Council.

99. BANCROFT GARDENS – UPDATE ON VEHICULAR ACCESS

The Service Manager – Grounds Maintenance advised the Committee that at its meeting held on 16 August 2005 (Minute 45 refers) more information had been requested on; signage, access for disabled visitors, parking enforcement with a request for graphic of Bancroft Gardens indicating parking bays and the location of a barrier. The Service Manager reminded the Committee that this item had been deferred from the meeting held on 8 November 2005 (Minute 82 refers) to allow further consultation with users of Bancroft Gardens.

The Service Manager confirmed that a survey of parking trends had taken place to compare usage of the NHDC car park and vehicles parked in Bancroft Gardens . The Committee noted that cars were parked in Bancroft Gardens even though sufficient spaces were available in the NHDC car park. To restrict access for all vehicles except deliveries, maintenance and emergency, but, to allow access for disabled badge holders a barrier had been proposed as shown at Appendix A. This barrier would stop vehicles encroaching into the park and contain car parking to one area of the park while not affecting the use of the pavilion, public tennis courts and bowling greens. The Committee noted that the operation of the barrier would be managed by the Grounds Team at NHDC and the appointed grounds contractor.

The Committee noted that meetings with all interested parties had taken place on 23 and 28 November and these groups had accepted that a barrier/gate would be the best way forward to solve the current problems at Bancroft Gardens and the area around the play area safer. The Service Manager confirmed that there would be regular meetings with the user groups to discuss the effects of the barrier and how positive measures could be introduced which would improve Bancroft Gardens for everyone.

The Service Manager advised that the estimated cost of installing parking limitations would be some £4,500 which would be found from existing Capital funds provided for the improvement of the play area in Bancroft Gardens.

RESOLVED: That the installation of a barrier and parking restrictions in Bancroft Gardens as per the plan presented at Appendix A to the report be agreed and implemented as soon as possible.

REASON FOR DECISIONS:

To meet the Council's strategic objectives.

100. SERVICE AND FINANCIAL PLANNING – SAVINGS AND GROWTH 2006/2007 AND 2010/2011

The Head of Financial Services reminded the Committee that Savings and Growth Items had been presented to Members at Budget Workshops held on 31 October 2006 and 2 November 2006 and received by Cabinet at its meeting held on 15 November 2006 (Minute 126 refers).

Following the meeting of Cabinet on 26 July 2005 (Minute 47refers) a lot of progress had been made and at the meeting of Cabinet on 18 October 2005 (Minute 106 refers), the savings target had increased to £1.8 million in order to accommodate: £0.5 million growth, maintain a phased use of balances and keep the Council Tax increase to no higher than RPI plus 2 percentage points. The HFS reported that the actual level of government support grant had yet to be confirmed and referred the Committee to Appendix 7 which included the updated Service and Financial Planning Timetable.

The HFS provided an overview of the work of the Challenge Board and in particular the review of the subsidised services where increased charges might be necessary dependant on the current level of subsidy at more than £500, more than £50 and between £5 and £50. The Committee noted that a comparison had been made with charges levied by neighbouring authorities and that where increased charges had been proposed within NHDC that Heads of Service were requested to put forward a range of possible increases for consideration.

In his concluding comments the HFS gave details of the Financial Strategy for 2006/2011 with the proposed savings and growth for 2006/2007 as detailed at Appendices 1 to 6. The HFS advised the Committee that following the meeting of Cabinet on 15 November (Minute 128 refers) officers had been requested to review the total savings and growth items for their own service area as a gap remained between the targets for savings and growth and subsequently report to the meeting of Cabinet on 20 December 2006.

The Committee noted the comments raised by the HFS and:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Head of Financial Services be thanked for his presentation
- (2) That the Head of Financial Services be requested to note the following comments and suggestions for consideration by Cabinet at its meeting to be held on 20 December 2005.
 - (a) SP4. There should be no reduction in the financial provision to the training budgets throughout North Hertfordshire District Council;
 - (b) SP9. There should be no reduction in the financial support to the Playscheme service;
 - (c) SP11. There should be no reduction in the financial support to the Youth Development service;
 - (d) SP12. There should be no reduction in the financial support to the Over 50s service;
 - (e) SP13. There should be no reduction in the financial support to the Meals on Wheels service;
 - (f) SP22. There should be no reduction in the financial support to the Area Committee budgets;
 - (g) SP24. There should be no reduction in the overall costs of democracy;

REASON FOR DECISIONS:

To allow the Hitchin Committee participate in the consultation process for the proposed growth bids prior to Cabinet setting the draft 2005 budget.

101. AREA GOVERNANCE

The Head of Community Development and Cultural Services (HCDCS) advised the Committee that Cabinet at its meeting held on 17 May 2005 (Minute 11 refers) had approved a report on Area Governance prepared by the Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group. The Committee noted that the purpose of this Task and Finish Group was to review the effectiveness of the NHDC Area Committee System of democratic engagement.

The HCDCS referred the Committee to Appendix 1 which in Sections A, B and C reflected the outcomes of meetings held with Area Committee Chairmen, Vice Chairmen and Portfolio Holders. The Committee noted that all actions in Sections A and B were now in place or were on target to meet the stated deadlines. However, there were three actions (48,49 and 54) which required additional consideration by each Area Committee and Action 55 was considered unfeasible at the moment.

The HCDCS drew the Committee's attention to Actions 48, 49 and 54 at Section C of Appendix 2 and the Committee noted the particular linkage to Appendix 2 which listed the Terms of Reference of possible additional delegation to Area Committees.

With regard to Action 48 this referred to the consideration of any additional budgets that might be passed to Area Committees e.g. Area visioning budgets, Budgets for local amenities and Allotments. Although the Area Committees held funds for visioning, one option could be to have more detailed information on Section 106 funding and another where a local benefit from Service Level Agreements could be delegated to Area Committees.

With regard to Action 49 this referred to the consideration of any additional powers that might be passed to Area Committees e.g. Environmental initiatives, Planning and monitoring delivery of local services and Traffic Regulation Orders. The Committee noted that before any of these items were passed to Area Committees there would be a linkage into the Service and Financial Planning Process.

With regard to Action 54 this referred to the determination of planning applications and the possibility of additional meetings to be convened by the Chairman. These extra meetings would improve planning performance times and applicants could expect a more timely service. The HCDCS advised that any development on this matter would be dependent on the outcomes of the Audit Commission review of the NHDC Planning Services due in early 2006.

The Committee welcomed the opportunity to debate the proposals put forward under Area Governance and the additional delegation to Area Committees. Of particular concern was the potential allocation of planning control to a central committee. During the debate support for retention with Area Committees or a central planning committee was mixed and it was agreed that further consideration should be made following receipt of the Audit Commission report on NHDC Planning Control Service.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the proposed actions for Area Governance as set out in Sections A and B in Appendix 1 be agreed.
- (2) That the proposed actions for Area Governance (with the exception of Actions 48, 49 and 54) as set out in Section C of Appendix 1 be agreed.
- (3) That the Head of Community Development and Cultural Services be requested to present in his report to Cabinet on 17 January 2006 the following items from Appendix 2 as additional delegation to Area Committees with particular reference to Action 48 (1g,) and Action 49 (1d, 1m, 7,8, and 9);
 - (1d) Enforcement and regulation;
 - (1g) The making of grants;
 - (1m) The functions of the Council under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998;
 - (7) The determination of individual issues within established strategies and policies which are relevant to that area;
 - (8) The development of external partnerships in the pursuance of approved strategic objectives;
 - (9) The review and monitoring of the Highways Partnership and residual highway agency functions and the promotion of schemes to the Highways Partnership within each Committee area.
- (4) That with regard to Action 48, Hitchin Committee supported these proposals and that the Head of Community Development and Cultural Services be requested to present in his report to Cabinet on 17 January 2006 the following:
 - (a) That there should be a full time appointment to the post of Hitchin Markets Manager with strong support from the Hitchin Town Centre Initiative;
 - (b) That consideration should be given to the transfer of play areas in Hitchin to the Hitchin Committee;
- (5) That Hitchin Committee supported these proposals detailed at Action 49.

(6) That with regard to Action 54 the Head of Community Development and Cultural Services be requested to present in his report to Cabinet on 17 January 2006 the views of Hitchin Committee as follows:

- (a) That any decision on Development Control should be deferred until the report of the Audit Commission on the NHDC Planning Control Service had been received and reviewed;
- (b) That a cross party Planning Control Workshop be convened as soon as possible following analysis of the Audit Commission report to debate fully any changes to current arrangements.

REASON FOR DECISIONS:

To ensure the effective implementation of Area Governance.

102. CHAMPION NEWS

The Community Development Officer (CDO) provided an update on the following activities: Wheeled Sport Facility at Walsworth Common, Westmill Community Centre, Tree planting at Butts Close and Walsworth Festival 2006.

With regard to Walsworth Common the CDO confirmed that a meeting held on 2 December 2006 had attracted a large number of young people, and another meeting will be convened to discuss designs. With regard to Westmill a meeting had been held on 22 November 2006 and a questionnaire will be sent to local schools, the Youth Service, Caldicott clubs and Groundwork Herts.

The Committee welcomed the information on alternative tree species for Butts Close and it was suggested that the same species of trees could be replanted as this would maintain Butts Close without change. It was also considered that as Butts Close was a major amenity space for residents and visitors that the Countryside Management Service should be included in any work programme for the enhancement of Butts Close.

The CDO advised the Committee that the 2006 Walsworth Festival would be held on Sunday 21 May.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the information provided by the Community Development Officer on activities since the meeting of the Hitchin Committee held on 8 November 2005 be noted;
- (2) That the Community Development Officer be requested to enter into discussions with the Countryside Management Service for the purpose of joint consultation and partnership for any works at Butts Close;
- (3) That congratulations and a vote of thanks be recorded in respect of the excellent work and the commendable progress in community development undertaken by the Community Development Officer during the last 12 months.

REASON FOR DECISIONS:

To ensure that the Hitchin Committee are kept informed of the work of the Community Development Officer.

103. GRANTS TO VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT BUDGET 2005/2006

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the funds available in 2005/2006 for the Visioning Budget of £1,680, the Central Area Budget of £0, the Base Budget of £240 and the total Ward Development Discretionary Budget of £10,040 be noted.
- (2) That the sum of £4,000 be credited to the Central Area Budget as a 'top slice' contribution from each ward as follows: Bearton = £1,069, Highbury = £927, Oughton = £616, Priory = £667 and Walsworth = £721.

REASON FOR DECISION:

To advise the Hitchin Committee of funds available for disbursement in the year 2005/2006.

104. GRANT APPLICATION – HERTS YOUNG HOMELESS GROUP

RESOLVED that an award of £3,868 be made to the Herts Young Homeless Group as a contribution towards the costs associated with the provision of information, advice and support to the Young Homeless Group in Hitchin and that this sum be taken from the Central Area Budget as agreed at Minute 103 (2) above.

105. HITCHIN TOWN CENTRE MANAGER

The Hitchin Town Centre Manager advised the Committee that traders from Hitchin Market would be holding a market on Sunday 18 December in Market Square and High Street. The Committee noted that a survey of the Town Hall would take place soon with regard as to its suitability for a Community Engagement Centre and experience gained in Shoreditch and Haringey would be most useful. The Town Centre Manager wished to promote the introduction of brown heritage signs for Hitchin and that he supported the move for a permanent Markets Manager for Hitchin and that the Town Centre Initiative could be involved in this promotion of Hitchin.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the information provided by the Hitchin Town Centre Manager be noted;
- (2) That the Community Development Officer be requested to liaise with the Hitchin Town Centre Manager concerning an update report to the Hitchin Committee at its meeting to be held on 24 January 2006 on the future proposals to use Hitchin Town Hall as a Centre for Community Engagement.

The meeting closed at 10.07 p.m.

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Chairman