

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

HITCHIN COMMITTEE

Meeting held at Benslow Music Trust, Benslow Lane, Hitchin,
on 17 April 2007 at 7.30p.m.

MINUTES

PRESENT: *Councillors: Judi Billing (Chairman), Derek Sheard (Vice - Chairman), Mrs A.G. Ashley, David Billing, Paul Clark, Joan Kirby, Bernard Lovewell, Lawrence Oliver, Deepak Sangha, R. Shakespeare- Smith, Martin Stears, R.A.C. Thake and Sarah Wren.*

IN ATTENDANCE: *Mary Caldwell – Planning Control and Conservation Manager
Margaret Bracey - Community Development Officer,
Nigel Schofield – Committee Administrator.*

117. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The Chairman welcomed the Hitchin Town Centre Manager at Agenda Item 5 – Public Participation

The Chairman thanked everyone who attended the Hitchin Town Talk.

The Chairman advised that the next meeting of the Hitchin Committee following the District Elections on 3 May was provisionally planned for Tuesday 12 June at Benslow Music Trust preceded by Town Talk at 6.30 p.m.

118. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

119. MINUTES – 6 MARCH 2007

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2007 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman

MINUTE 110 (6)

The Chairman confirmed that Cabinet at its meeting held on 27 March 2007 (Minute 189 refers) had declined to amend the NHDC Statement of Licensing Policy following legal advice from the Corporate Legal Manager.

MINUTE 113 (2)

The Chairman confirmed that an oral update on the work programme for the implementation of Controlled Parking Zones would be made at this meeting.

120. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Agenda Item 9 – Triangle Festival

Councillor Deepak Sangha declared a personal interest in that an immediate member of his family was a Triangle Festival 2007 Committee Member and that he would remain in the room for this item and reserved the right to speak and vote.

Agenda Item 9 – Champion News

Councillors Paul Clark and Joan Kirby declared a prejudicial interest as Members of the Licensing and Appeals Committee that would hear the application for an event licence for the Walsworth Festival and that if the Committee discussed the Walsworth Festival they would leave the room for the duration of the discussion. Councillors B. Lovewell and R. Shakespeare – Smith declared a prejudicial interest as Treasurer and Secretary respectively of the Walsworth Festival 2007 and that if the Committee discussed the Walsworth Festival they would leave the room for the duration of the discussion.

Agenda Item 10 – Discretionary Budgets 2007 - 2008

Triangle Festival 2007 – Grant application. Councillor Deepak Sangha declared a personal interest as a member of his immediate family was a member of the Triangle Festival 2007 Committee and that he reserved the right to speak and vote on this item.

Rhythms of the World 2007 – Grant application. Councillors Judi Billing and David Billing declared a prejudicial interest in that a member of their immediate family would be a performing artiste at the 2007 ROTW and confirmed that they would leave the room for the duration of this item.

121. HITCHIN TOWN CENTRE INITIATIVE

The Hitchin Town Centre Manager (TCM) thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee.

The TCM provided a comprehensive introduction to the formation of the Hitchin Town Centre Initiative established in 1995, with a membership in 2007 of 170 organisations and businesses, with more than a third of members drawn from outside Hitchin. A steering group - meeting monthly - had a wide membership and the inputs of Hitchin Councillors was very much appreciated. The TCM remarked that the non –appointment of an NHDC officer to the steering group (since May 2006) was a cause for concern when partnership working was a key function and NHDC was a key organisation in the development of Hitchin e.g. Churchgate.

In addition to the steering group the TCM confirmed the benefit from the sustainability group – which reviewed *inter alia*: Service Level Agreement, Asset Development, and individual projects and events – with over 200 visits and meetings attended each year by the TCM and more than 8000 personal callers to the HTC office each year. The Hitchin Town Centre News was distributed to over 1000 addresses and there were many events in Hitchin throughout each year that were listed in his weekly column 'Town and Around' in the Comet newspaper. Chamber of Commerce breakfasts were very popular and Sainsburys plc and Boots plc head office staff had visited Hitchin and the TCM confirmed that he was a national mentor for Town Centre Management throughout the UK.

The TCM confirmed that the Hitchin Festival – first three weeks of July 2007 - went from strength to strength and the box office opened on 11 June with the ever popular ROTW taking place on the weekend of 14 and 15 July, Hitchin Film Club had a varied programme and there would be many local events as in previous years.

The Town Centre Office was used by several groups e.g. Black Squirrel Credit Union, Amnesty International and Fairtrade. The TCM reminded the Committee that the Hitchin Town Centre Initiative was a 'not for profit' organisation and it was often a slight profit or slight loss with 2006-2007 showing a small surplus. The TCM thanked NHDC for the major financial support and Hitchin Committee in particular.

The TCM repeated his previous requests for action on the Churchgate Development to start as soon as possible, he reminded the Committee that it was seven years since Hammersmatch had made its first presentation to Hitchin Committee. The Committee noted that Hammersmatch had recently met with the Hitchin Market Traders and that a measure of understanding had been reached.

In conclusion the TCM advised the Committee that after a period of uncertainty the prospect of Street Trading passing to the HTCI had not been approved and that this function would be performed by Hertfordshire Highways. The Committee considered that this was a weak proposal and that such an activity would be better suited to local resources. The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environmental Health advised the Committee that despite this decision discussions were still in hand to determine if there was a way forward to involve HTCI.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Hitchin Town Centre Manager be thanked for the presentation;

- (2) That the Hitchin Committee strongly supported the work undertaken by the Hitchin Town Centre Manager and congratulated him on the progress made since his appointment;
- (3) That the Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance be advised of the concerns of the Hitchin Committee at the continued lack of appointment of an HDC officer to the Hitchin Town Centre Initiative Steering Group;
- (4) That the Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance be requested to advise the Committee via the next issue of Champion News of the reasons for non appointment of an NHDC officer to the HTCI Steering Group and the expectations of such an officer appointment.
- (5) That the Licensing and Enforcement Manager be requested to advise the Committee via the next issue of Champion News of the reasons for the transfer of street trading permits from NHDC to Hertfordshire Highways and the progress being made to reverse this decision.

122. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

RESOLVED to determine the planning applications as set out in the report of the Head of Planning and Building control and as indicated in the following schedule:

SCHEDULE

Reference Number	Description of Development and Location	Decision
06/02796/1	Foxholes, Pirton Road, Hitchin. Three storey extension and conversion of existing stables building and Coach House to provide additional bedroom and living accommodation for residents, staff accommodation in roof space and self contained Dementia Unit following demolition of existing single and two storey extensions. (Amended site layout plan received 14.02.07).	Conditional Permission (see (a)below)

- (a) That subject to the Secretary of State not wishing to call in the application for his own determination as a Green Belt departure from the Development Plan, as the application was proposing an extension of more than 1000m² in the Green Belt (Planning application reference 06/02796/1) permission be **GRANTED** as per the report of the Planning Control and Conservation Manager.

123. PLANNING APPEALS - UPDATE

The Planning Control and Conservation Manager confirmed that one appeal had been lodged and two appeals had been determined since the meeting of this Committee held on 6 March 2007.

Appellant	Leighton and Henley Limited
Address	Former Tyre and Exhaust Centre, 18-20 Stevenage Road, Hitchin.
Description:	Three storey building to provide 9 two bedroom and 2 one bedroom flats with archway vehicular access, 16 car parking spaces and amenity area, following demolition of existing buildings. Note: The appeal is against Condition 11 of the permission which specified ' no gates shall be provided across the entrance to the site or within archway across the development. Reason: In the interest of highway safety so that vehicles do not wait on public highway and in order that development is seen to satisfactorily integrate into the local community. Ref. 06/1350/1
Procedure:	Written representations.

Appellant; Mr Cengiz Kilic
Address: 151b Bearton Road, Hitchin.
Description: Extension of opening hours of existing hot food take away to include 12 noon till 10.30 p.m. on Sundays (as variation of condition 1 of planning ref. 04/00930/1 granted on 10/08/04).
Decision: Appeal DISMISSED on 5 March 2007.
Committee/ Delegated: Delegated.

Appellant; Mr Camilleri
Address: 67 Hampden Road, Hitchin.
Description: Single storey side extension to provide single garage and shower room together with alteration to existing garage to facilitate use as study and utility room.
Ref. 05/1297/1HH
Decision: Appeal DISMISSED and Enforcement Notice upheld on 9 March 2007.
Committee/ Delegated: Committee.

124. CHAMPION NEWS

The Community Development Officer provided an update on activities since the last meeting held on 6 March 2007. The CDO referred the Committee to the Minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2007 (Minute 113(4) refers) and the request for information on the allocation and provision of allotments which was presented at Appendix A to this report. Members expressed concern about the provision of an Allotments Policy (including allocation of land and shortage of plots) due to an increasing demand for such plots. It was considered appropriate by the Committee that officers be requested to provide information to the next meeting of the Hitchin Committee on 12 June 2007 concerning an Allotments Policy.

The Committee noted the activities concerning Walsworth Festival, Bee keeping at Old Hale Way, Walsworth Common, Tree planting at Butts Close and the Town Centre Youth Project. Young people expressed a view that an indoor meeting place was not appropriate and further discussions would address the problem of a venue – possibly outdoors.

The Committee were advised that the dumping of supermarket trolleys in the River Hiz adjacent to the Sainsburys store continued and that Sainsburys plc had not removed the trolleys after notification. The CDO confirmed that she would contact the local branch manager.

The Committee noted that officers had commenced further consultation via a draft questionnaire with the all residents of the Triangle Area with regard to the introduction of a Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) and that a full questionnaire would be sent to residents at the beginning of June 2007. In response to an enquiry about the availability of staff to consult residents and implement CPZs the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport confirmed that the Corporate Management Team had agreed the financial resources to commit officer time to this project. The CDO advised that consultation had been completed in The Avenue and Highbury Road and that officer time had been committed to this project for design and implementation. The Committee were advised that this additional commitment of human resource for both schemes would be available for 2007-2008 only.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport confirmed that Cabinet at its meeting held on 27 March 2007 (Minute 205 refers) had reviewed a strategic approach to parking across North Herts and that proposals would be published soon.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the information provided by the Community Development Officer on activities since the last meeting of the Hitchin Committee held on 5 March 2007 be noted;

- (2) That the Community Development Officer be requested to contact the Manager of Sainsburys plc, Hitchin Store concerning the non-removal of supermarket trolleys from the River Hiz and provide an update in the next issue of Champion News;
- (3) That the Countryside and Parks Manager, the Local Framework Manager and the Head of Financial Services be requested to make a joint statement on Allotments Policy to advise the Hitchin Committee via the next edition of Champion News the current status of an Allotments Policy for North Hertfordshire and indicate when such a policy would be complete and implemented;

REASON FOR DECISIONS:

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

125. ANNUAL GRANTS, DEVELOPMENT, DISCRETIONARY AND VISIONING BUDGET 2006/2007

The Committee considered the current expenditure and balance of the Annual Grants, Development, Discretionary and Visioning budget for 2006 – 2007.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the expenditure, allocations, and balance of the current 2006-2007 Development Budget, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be noted;
- (2) That the timing and allocation of grants by the Hitchin Committee at each of the six meetings in the Civic Year 2007-2008 be discussed in more detail at the next meeting to be held on 12 June 2007.

REASON FOR DECISIONS:

To advise the Hitchin Committee of funds remaining for disbursement in the year 2006/2007.

126. GRANT APPLICATION – TRIANGLE FESTIVAL 2007

RESOLVED: That a grant of £3,000 be awarded ‘in principle’ from the 2007-2008 Hitchin Discretionary Budget as a contribution towards costs associated with the festival.

127. GRANT APPLICATION – RTHYHMS OF THE WORLD 2007

RESOLVED: That a grant of £10,000 be awarded ‘in principle’ from the 2007-2008 Hitchin Discretionary Budget as a contribution towards costs associated with ROTW in 2007 be agreed and subject to the retention of £1, 000 as a ‘damage bond’.

128. VOTE OF THANKS

The Chairman proposed and it was agreed that a vote of thanks be recorded in respect of the assistance and professional duties performed by officers from Planning Control, Community Development and Democratic Services in the Civic Year 2006 – 2007.

A member of the Committee proposed and it was agreed unanimously that a vote of thanks be recorded in respect of the Chairmanship, diplomacy and leadership provided by Councillor Judi Billing as Chairman of the Hitchin Committee.

The meeting closed at 8.41 p.m.

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Chairman