

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

HITCHIN COMMITTEE

**Meeting held at The Westmill Community Centre John Barker Place, Hitchin,
on 20 November 2007 at 7.30p.m.**

MINUTES

PRESENT: *Councillors: Deepak Sangha (Chairman), Mrs A.G. Ashley, David Billing, Paul Clark, Joan Kirby, Bernard Lovewell, Alan Millard, Lawrence Oliver, R. Shakespeare – Smith, Martin Stears and R.A.C. Thake.*

IN ATTENDANCE: *Barrie Jones – Head of Financial Services
Patrick Candler - Head of Community Development and Cultural Services
Andy Godman - Head of Housing and Environmental Health
Steve Geach – Parks and Countryside Development Manager
Margaret Bracey - Community Development Officer,
Nigel Schofield – Committee Administrator.*

60. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor Deepak Sangha tendered the apologies of the Chairman Councillor Judi Billing and confirmed that he would be Chairman for this meeting.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the Westmill Community Centre for providing the venue.

The Chairman thanked everyone who attended the Hitchin Town Talk.

The Chairman welcomed those making a presentation to the Committee.

The Chairman confirmed that a public meeting 'Sustainable Community Strategy' would be held at Church House, Churchyard on 5 December 2007 commencing at 7.30 p.m.

The Chairman was pleased to advise all those present of the venue for the next two meetings of the Hitchin Committee which would be preceded by Hitchin Town Talk from 6.15 p.m. to 7.15 p.m.

Tuesday 15 January 2008 – 7.30 p.m. at The Palmer Room, Benslow Music Trust Hitchin.

Tuesday 18 March 2008 – 7.30 p.m. at Christ Church, Bedford Road, Hitchin.

61. APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillors Judi Billing and Clare Body.

62. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman confirmed that there would be no other items of business at this meeting.

63. MINUTES – 25 SEPTEMBER 2007

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2007 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

64. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Agenda item 6 – Rhythms of the World Festival 2008

Councillor David Billing declared a prejudicial interest in that a member of his immediate family might be a performing artiste at the 2008 ROTW festival. With this declaration made Councillor Billing confirmed that he would address the Committee at the commencement of the meeting and then withdraw for the duration of this item.

65. PRESENTATION OF A PETITION – TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ISSUES IN CADWELL LANE, HITCHIN

The speaker confirmed to the Chairman that he was a representative of Cadwell Lane Residents Association and Hitchin Residents' Alliance. The representative presented to the Chairman with a petition that contained 835 signatures entitled 'To stop scrap lorries coming down residential roads in Hitchin access to the industrial area and to have an independent access road built into the industrial estate' which the Chairman was pleased to accept.

Whilst the Task and Finish Group had made excellent progress in the short time since its inception the residents were adamant that the problems should be resolved even though there were many separate agencies involved. There was currently no relief from current conditions and it was felt by both groups that official bodies were 'passing the buck' and not taking responsibility to alleviate the problems caused by the movement of scrap lorries, the daily workings of the processing plant and the dust and noise created by the works at the Hitchin railway station for the movement and shipment of processed scrap waste. Also, letters to agencies had gone unanswered and it was felt by residents that NHDC should take the lead in resolving the problems and include local residents wherever possible in the consultation and informing process.

The two groups wished to see the construction of the new relief road as soon as possible and that full use should be made of the former gas works for a rail siding that would remove the need for large scrap lorries to traverse residential roads in Hitchin.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the representative of the Cadwell Lane Residents Association and the Hitchin Residents Alliance be thanked for the presentation;
- (2) That the receipt of a petition with 835 signatures 'To stop scrap lorries coming down residential roads in Hitchin access to the industrial area and to have an independent access road built into the industrial estate' be confirmed.

66. PRESENTATION OF A PETITION – TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ISSUES IN GROVE ROAD, HITCHIN

The representative for the residents of Grove Road thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and presented a petition with nearly 100 signatures objecting to the increased volume of heavy traffic in Grove Road which included large scrap lorries with open tops proceeding to the Cadwell Lane Industrial Estate. By way of evidence a collection of scrap items that had fallen from these lorries was produced.

The representative accepted that the Industrial Area was important in terms of local jobs and prosperity for Hitchin but the volume and size of large vehicles using Grove Road had increased in the last eight months to an intolerable situation. Heavy lorries often moved at speeds in excess of the official 30 m.p.h. limit and residents houses shook as lorries passed up and down the road. People, as well as the houses were under increasing stress and two measures were proposed:

1. Enforcement of the 30 m.p.h. speed limit, use of additional signage, flashing warning lights and speed cameras;
2. Replace concrete bollards at a location where HGV regularly mounted the pavement as bollards placed at this location several years ago had been demolished by vehicles.

The Committee noted that the residents of Cadwell Lane had the support of Grove Road residents in the proposal for an alternative route into the Industrial Area – possibly by an extension of Wilbury Way onto the Stotfold Road.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the representative of the residents of Grove Road, Hitchin be thanked for the presentation;
- (2) That the receipt of a petition with 100 signatures ‘ That the weight and volume of traffic using Grove Road has reached proportions that are untenable’ be confirmed.

67. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – ANGELS SUPPORT GROUP

The representatives from the Angels support Group thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee. The representatives explained that their support group was for parents and carers of children with Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) or an autistic spectrum disorder. The main objectives of the group were: Friendship, support, sharing of ideas, difficulties and concerns, reduction of isolation, devise new strategies for coping, obtain professional advice and provide ‘adult only’ time. There was a parent led Committee which met regularly, produced newsletters and organised seminars for parents. The group met weekly at the Community Centre at Oughton School, Westmill, Hitchin and the number of users had grown year on year, and now young adults attended the support group who had joined as toddlers.

The size of the support group had made the need for additional funding more critical and there were few resources which would provide for this particular need. In response to an enquiry the representatives confirmed that the support group did not meet the criteria set for funding from Children in Need.

The Committee expressed their support for the group and it was agreed that it would be appropriate for a grant application to be presented at the next meeting of the Hitchin Committee to be held on 15 January 2008.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the representatives of Angels Support be thanked for the very informative presentation;
- (2) That the work of The Angels Support Group had the support of the Hitchin Committee.
- (3) That the Hitchin Community Development Officer be requested to contact the Angels Support Group in order to submit a grant application to the next meeting of the Hitchin Committee to be held on 15 January 2008.

REASON FOR DECISIONS

To ensure the continued support of the Hitchin Committee for local voluntary organisations.

68. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – HITCHIN BEE CENTRE ASSOCIATION

The representative from the Hitchin Bee Centre Association thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee. The proposal was to establish a Community Bee Garden for Hitchin following the offer of land by NHDC at the Old Hale Way allotment site. The site was ideal for bee keeping and the centre would illustrate all aspects of beekeeping, have eight hives, a Discovery Centre, and a Community Garden which would focus on the fruit, vegetable and flowers that depend on bees for pollination. The objectives of this Community Bee Garden would include: Promotion of ‘hobby’ beekeeping; Raise public awareness in bees and recreational beekeeping; Raise public awareness of the environmental importance of recreational beekeeping; and to provide facilities for public use and community groups.

The Committee noted that local beekeepers had formed an Action Group which would manage the eight hives in the Bee Centre and administer the Community Bee Garden on a voluntary basis. Work had started in early March 2007 and the Bee Centre, Bee Lawn and Bee Equipment Shed were complete and funded from a private donation. The representative acknowledged the previous grant of £500 which would be put towards the costs for the Community Bee Garden, Discovery Centre and Plant Nursery. However, for this local community project to proceed a much larger sum of finance was required. Fortunately, this site qualified for assistance from Landfill Tax and WREN had indicated their willingness to make £25,000 available subject to the sum of £2,500 being raised from other sources.

The Committee acknowledged that this large sum could not be funded from the 2007-2008 Discretionary Development budget and that this would be a Revenue funded item as Capital funding was for sums in excess of £29,000. The Head of Financial Services advised the Committee that it might be possible to transfer unused funds in the Capital Visioning Budget for 2007-2008 to the 2008-2009 Discretionary Development budget.

Should this transfer of funds be possible the Committee agreed that a grant application should be made to the Hitchin Committee at the meeting to be held in May 2008.

In conclusion the representative thanked the Committee for their support and requested that should the grant application be successful and that WREN confirmed their commitment that the overall application should be made by North Hertfordshire District Council.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the representative of the Hitchin Bee Centre Association be thanked for the very informative presentation;
- (2) That the proposal to establish a Community Bee Garden at the Old Hale Way allotment site had the unanimous support of the Hitchin Committee;
- (3) That subject to the availability of funding from the 2008-2009 Discretionary Development Budget together with the possible transfer of funds remaining in the Capital Visioning Budget a grant application for costs associated with the establishment of a bee garden at the Old Hale Way Allotment site would be considered at the first meeting of the Hitchin Committee in the Civic Year 2008 – 2009.
- (4) That the award of a grant at (3) above would be dependent on a substantial donation from WREN via monies reclaimed from Landfill Tax.

REASON FOR DECISIONS

To ensure the continued support of the Hitchin Committee for local voluntary organisations.

69. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – WALSWORTH BREAKFAST CLUB

The representative of the Walsworth Breakfast club thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee. The Breakfast Club was available for all secondary school pupils and was ideally placed for pupils attending Hitchin Girls School. It was well known that many children go to school without a suitable breakfast despite the benefits of have a breakfast. Consideration had been given to using school caterers but the cost had been prohibitive and at the moment a maximum of 11 school children had used the facility at Walsworth Baptist Church and there five regular users. In response to an enquiry the representative confirmed that all local schools had received notification of the Breakfast Club.

The Committee acknowledged the additional information and supported the aims of the Breakfast Club. It was agreed that a revised grant application should be placed before the Committee at the next meeting to be held on 15 January 2008.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the representative of Walsworth Breakfast Club be thanked for the presentation;
- (2) That the provision of additional information confirming the activities and users of the club be noted;
- (3) That the Hitchin Community Development Officer be requested to contact the Walsworth Breakfast Club in order to submit a revised grant application to the next meeting of the Hitchin Committee to be held on 15 January 2008.

70. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – RHYTHMS OF THE WORLD 2007

The representative of the ROTW 2007 Committee thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee.

The ROTW 2007 Committee acknowledged and expressed their thanks for the grant made in 2007. The 2007 Festival had been the best yet for diversity of music and blessed with good weather for the two days, more than 12,500 performers, and an estimated 30,000 visitors to the event had confirmed that Hitchin Town Centre was too small for the size of event that ROTW had become, there was simply not enough space and the distribution of litter and waste had increased not only in amount but in location which meant more charges for litter collection, disposal and cleansing. The 2007 Festival had made a financial loss with ever increasing charges for insurance and staging in the town centre location. The cost of waste collection and cleansing had been c£12,000 which was matched by the public donations on the two days.

The representative advised the Committee that serious consideration was in hand to move the 2008 ROTW festival to a 'greenfield site' on the outskirts of Hitchin which would provide more space and recreate a village fete and that several locations were under consideration.

The Committee expressed concern at the proposal to move the 2008 festival outside of Hitchin Town Centre, possible problems of access for visitors and whether in the light of a financial loss in 2007 an entry charge might be considered. Also, the town centre businesses would see a reduced turnover and it was agreed that the town centre location was the reason for the festival success. The Committee also considered that a move away from the town centre would deter voluntary groups and small performing acts from moving to a large open air site. The representative confirmed that approximately six months prior to the event was required to undertake all actions including premises licences.

The representative expressed the desire of the 2008 ROTW Committee to continue with the success of the 2007 festival and the Festival Committee would do their best regarding transport, the site must not be inaccessible and that no decision had been taken on an admission charge.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the representative of the Rhythms of the World Committee be thanked for the presentation;
- (2) That the provision of information concerning the possible move of ROTW to a 'greenfield site' as opposed to remaining in Hitchin Town Centre for 2008 be noted;

71. RHYTHMS OF THE WORLD - THE FUTURE

The Head of Community Development and Cultural Services (HCD) agreed that the 2007 ROTW festival had been the best organised and issues raised at the debrief had been resolved and confirmed that visitors had come a much wider catchment area than before. The HCD agreed that Windmill Hill had been blighted by litter on both days but this area of Hitchin was outside the parts of Hitchin Town Centre covered by the separate premises licences.

The Committee discussed at some length *inter alia* the merits of a town centre festival against a 'greenfield site', should an admittance charge be made? Would there be a ROTW festival in 2008? And whether a grant from this Committee would be appropriate if a charge was made.

Following the debate the Committee agreed that the Vice-Chairman and another Member should receive delegated authority to make if necessary a decision on a grant before the next meeting of the Hitchin Committee to be held on 15 January 2008.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Hitchin Committee wished to place on record its appreciation of the excellent work performed by the ROTW 2007 Committee and NHDC officers in the organisation and presentation of the 2007 Festival;
- (2) That the NHDC officer conclusions and suggestions for future action as presented at Paragraph 4 be noted;
- (3) That subject to the agreement of local organisations that had an interest in land at Butts Close the Hitchin Committee would support the use of this area should the 2008 Festival be located in Hitchin Town Centre;
- (4) That the potential for increased costs for the 2008 Festival if held in Hitchin Town Centre associated with policing and waste management be noted;
- (5) That the Committee would support 'in principle' the award of a grant of £10,000 from the 2008 – 2009 Discretionary Development Budget as a contribution to the operating costs of the 2008 Festival which would be subject to clarification of the site to be used in 2008 and the level of any charges that the ROTW 2008 Committee might introduce;
- (6) That upon a decision being made as to the location of the 2008 ROTW Festival before the next meeting of the Hitchin Committee on 15 January 2008, it was agreed that the Vice-Chairman and another nominated Member should make a decision on any grant award and inform the Hitchin Committee.
- (7) That should the 2008 Festival go ahead in Hitchin Town Centre and the grant of £10,000 be awarded that a 'damage bond' of £1,000 be retained to contribute to any additional costs incurred by NHDC after the event such as waste disposal and maintenance issues.

REASON FOR DECISIONS

To allow the Hitchin Committee continue with its support for the annual ROTW Festival in and provide financial assistance to the operating costs of the Festival.

72. HITCHIN TOWN CENTRE MANAGER

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

The TCM thanked the Priory and Highbury Ward Members for the grants made to the Hitchin Town Centre Initiative that allowed the provision of Christmas Lights in the town centre to go ahead. The TCM acknowledged the support of officers at NHDC and Hitchin Town Centre Initiative who had assisted in the preparation of the bid presented to the Community Assets Fund concerning Hitchin Town Hall. The Committee noted that an announcement about bids proceeding past the initial assessment phase would be made on 18 January.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the information provided by the Hitchin Town Centre Manager be noted;
- (2) That the Hitchin Town Centre Manager be congratulated on meeting the deadline for the application to the Community Assets Fund concerning Hitchin Town Hall to be used as a Community Asset.

73. CADWELL LANE – ENVIRONMENTAL AND SAFETY ISSUES: HITCHIN AREA SCRUTINY TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Head of Housing and Environmental Health (HHEH) thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee on this issue which was of great importance to the residents of Hitchin.

The HHEH confirmed that the Hitchin Area Scrutiny Task and Finish Group had met on eight occasions between 21 June 2007 and 25 October 2007. The HHEH re-iterated the concerns of local residents placed before NHDC (which had been vigorously emphasised by the two petitions presented to the Hitchin Committee – Minutes 65 and 66 above refer), gave a summary of the current legislation which governed the activities of an industrial estate such as Cadwell Lane, and concluded with a summary of the work of the Task and Finish Group and information provided to the Group. The Committee noted the extensive consultation with NHDC officers, The Environment Agency, Herts County Council, Hertfordshire Constabulary, Hertfordshire Highways, H. Williams and Sons Limited, Cadwell Lane Residents' Association and Hitchin Residents Alliance.

The HHEH advised the Committee of the Short Term, Medium Term and Longer Term proposals developed by the Task Finish Group as presented at Paragraph 7.4 within the report. The HHEH confirmed that if the proposals were agreed by the Committee that he would report the recommendations to the Corporate Management Team (CMT) on 27 November 2007. This had to be the next step as CMT would need to consider all resource implications for this authority if some or all of the proposals were implemented and the HHEH would subsequently advise Cabinet of the CMT decisions.

Councillor Deepak Sangha confirmed that this had been a comprehensive review conducted in a relatively short time and the Committee agreed that there were many complex factors to consider and that all agencies must work together to solve the untenable situation for local residents. The Committee reviewed the proposals at Paragraph 7.4 and agreed that all should be pursued with determination and specific mention was made to Longer Term Proposal L1 and the development of the Hitchin Transport Plan, including a Northern Access Road.

During these discussions on the proposals the Committee referred to the impact of the NHDC Parking Strategy and linkages to the NHDC Strategic Objectives and NHDC Corporate Plan, a speed limit of 20 mph in the Industrial Estate and other roads in Hitchin. The HHEH advised the Committee that the County Council had recently sent out a Waste and Minerals Policy for consultation and that all residents should take the opportunity to make their views known.

The Committee also agreed that local residents must be invited by NHDC to participate in all future consultation for Cadwell Lane, The Railway Sidings and residential roads used by the scrap lorries, and that a solution would inevitably be long term. However, it was considered appropriate that the Scrutiny Committee should be invited to monitor the outcomes of CMT and Cabinet. It was also agreed that in order to ensure that progress was presented regularly to residents and Hitchin Area Committee that Health and Safety Issues in Cadwell should be a standard agenda item for the next and future Committee meetings.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group be offered a vote of thanks for the excellent report and recommendations contained therein;
- (2) That the short term, medium term and long term proposals as listed at Paragraph 7.4 be agreed as the best way forward to satisfy the needs of the local community, and every effort should be made to implement as many of the proposals as soon as possible;
- (3) That the Head of Housing and Environmental Health be requested to convey the decision of the Hitchin Committee to the next meeting of the Corporate Management Team to be held on 27 November 2007;
- (4) That the Head of Housing and Environmental Health be requested to provide a progress update to the next and each subsequent meeting of the Hitchin Committee either by way of a report, information note or via Champion News;

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

- (1) That the results and subsequent proposals of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group investigations into the Environmental and Health Issues for local residents be implemented as soon as possible;
- (2) That Cabinet be requested to approve an allocation of resources within North Hertfordshire District Council that would facilitate progress towards the implementation of the proposals.

RECOMMENDED TO THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- (1) That the Scrutiny Committee note the results of the Task and Finish Group;
- (2) That the Scrutiny Committee be requested to take the appropriate action to monitor the outcomes of the proposals made by the Task and Finish Group and subsequently recommended to Cabinet.

REASON FOR DECISIONS

To provide support to the residents of Cadwell Lane, Woolgrove Road, Cambridge Road and St. Michaels Road, Hitchin seeking to improve their quality of life and meet the Vision and key objectives of North Hertfordshire District Council i.e. A sustainable community, a safer community, a healthier community, an equal community, and a prosperous and satisfied community.

74. TREE STRATEGY

The Parks and Countryside Manager (PCM) presented the report of the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services and advised that Cabinet at its meeting held on 16 October 2007 (Minute 61 refers) had resolved in principle to adopt the Tree Strategy and that all Area Committees should be given the opportunity to comment on the Tree Strategy.

The PCM clarified the seven main facets of the Tree Strategy:

1. Provide a basis to perpetuate the character of towns and other areas and provide for a continuity of the local treescape by establishing a tree population with a balanced age structure and diverse species mix;
2. Allow the identification, quantification and evaluation of the Council's trees resource;

- 3.Enable the preparation and execution of maintenance regimes and the prioritising and programming of a periodic maintenance or conservation works appropriate to the nature of each site. The Council's legal obligations would also be met more effectively as would resistance to claims for damage or negligence;
- 4.Improve the service to the general public. By increasing proactive maintenance and prudent replacement, trees would cause less danger, damage and nuisance thus reducing complaints, claims for damage and emergency situations;
- 5.Enable the true cost of maintaining the Council's tree stock in a responsible manner to be established and allow realistic annual estimates to be complied. Initial costs could increase significantly, but in the longer term as the health and condition of the tree stock improves, subsequent maintenance costs should reduce;
- 6.Make the general public aware of the strategy by appropriate publicity thereby projecting the Council as an environmentally responsible body. Generally encourage and educate people not only to appreciate trees but also understand the reasons and need for tree renewal;
- 7.Establish a more positive form of tree management which would allow both Council Members and its officers to deal with representations from the public, which may conflict with the views of others, in a firm, fair and more orderly manner.

The Committee noted that there were three main tree sectors: Highway Trees, Cemetery Trees and Village Trees, but at the moment this authority had limited information on the number, age and condition of trees under its control with work ordered when and as required. The PCM advised that the cataloguing of trees would be done using a computerised database system 'Arbotrack' which would then provide a strategic approach to tree management and proactive tree management and a uniformity of service throughout North Hertfordshire.

The PCM confirmed that although a lack of funding would continue he was hopeful that Herts County Council would provide a grant to cover the survey and remedial work. Young trees would receive the most attention if causing a genuine nuisance or the tree was in a dangerous condition, with landowners bearing responsibility and therefore outside the scope of the Tree Strategy.

The Committee expressed concern about the management of trees in Hitchin Cemeteries, on highways where a large number of trees had been lost and the PCM confirmed that new trees could be planted under NHDC Revenue, but not until the Tree Strategy had been agreed and that the new trees did not have to be replacement trees. A Member also proposed that a two for one tree replacement policy could be adopted under a Section 106 agreement where trees had been felled during development.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Tree Strategy as presented at Appendix A to the report be noted;
- (2) That the Hitchin Committee expressed their unanimous support for the objectives detailed in the NHDC Tree Strategy;
- (3) That should any Member of the Hitchin Committee have any additional comments to make based on their local Ward knowledge would they please convey their comments to the Parks and Countryside Manager as soon as possible;
- (4) That the Parks and Countryside Manager be requested to convey in his report to the next meeting of Cabinet to be held on 18 December 2007 the unanimous support of the Hitchin Committee for the NHDC Tree Strategy and to include in the report any further comments and/or recommendations made by Members.

REASON FOR DECISIONS

To confirm the support of the Hitchin Committee for the NHDC Tree Strategy and sustainable working practices which would meet customer expectations for the maintenance and development of trees under NHDC ownership and management.

The Head of Financial Services (HFS) presented the report of the Strategic Director of Finance and Regulatory Services. The HFS also confirmed that the Efficiency and Investment Items for 2008-2009 through to 2012-2013 were presented to Cabinet on 16 October 2007 (Minute 60 refers), forwarded to Member Workshops held on 30 October and 1 November and subsequently to each of the Area Committees.

The HFS advised the Committee that a minimum efficiency target for 2008-2009 of £651,000 was required and this target incorporated changes to the General fund and an allowance of £250,000 for investment proposals against a Council Tax increase set at 4.9 per cent. The Committee noted that the proposed increase to car parking charges SG32 with a projected income of £141,000 had been rejected by Cabinet. The HFS confirmed that he would report to Cabinet at its meeting to be held on 18 December 2007 comments made by the Hitchin Committee. With this assurance in mind the Chairman led the Committee through each efficiency proposal (SG), each revenue investment proposal (RG), and each capital investment proposal (CG) and:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the information provided on Efficiencies and Investments for 2008-2009 at Appendices A to E be noted;
- (2) That the Head of Financial Services be requested to convey the wishes of the Hitchin Committee in his report to the next meeting of Cabinet to be held on 18 December 2007 where four specific proposals were rejected:
SG 10 – Deletion of Principal Conservation Officer Post
SG17 – Deletion of the Handyperson/Security Scheme
SG 25 – Cessation of subsidy to Eastern Orchestral Board
SG28 – Reduction of all Area Committee Grants by 10 per cent.
- (3) That the Head of Financial Services be requested to convey the wishes of the Hitchin Committee in his report to the next meeting of Cabinet to be held on 18 December 2007 for an additional revenue investment item.
RG 10 – Restructuring of Engineering function within the Planning Service (to include additional resource to manage the workload on Traffic Regulation Orders etc.).
- (4) That the Head of Financial Services be requested to convey the wishes of the Hitchin Committee in his report to the next meeting of Cabinet to be held on 18 December 2007 for an additional capital investment item.
CG 10 – Refurbishment of Hitchin Town Hall.

RECOMMENDED TO THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- (1) That the Scrutiny Finance Sub Group be requested to take note of the wishes of the Hitchin Committee concerning Efficiencies and Investments for 2008-2009;
- (2) That the Scrutiny Finance Sub Group be requested to undertake a review of the procedure used to identify new savings year by year such as those for the removal of officer posts (e.g. SG11, SG12, SG13, SG14 and SG15).

REASON FOR DECISIONS

- (1) To ensure that Cabinet are aware of the concerns of the Hitchin Committee on certain Efficiencies and Investment Items proposed for the Service and Financial Planning Service;
- (2) To ensure that the base expenditure is adjusted downwards to narrow the gap between the 2008 – 2009 District Requirement figure and the service spending requirements;
- (3) To allow the Scrutiny Finance Sub Group fulfil its role and make appropriate recommendations to Cabinet.

76. CHAMPION NEWS

The Community Development Officer (CDO) presented her report to the meeting and provided details of her community activities including; The Purwell Project, Hitchin allotments, Christmas Lights, Triangle Area Planning, Butts Close, Youth diversionary Activities, Churchgate Development, Westmill Youth Project, St. Johns Youth Club, John Barker Place refurbishment, Town Talk, Local Residents' Association at Chaucer Way and Hardy Close. The CDO confirmed that North Herts Homes had set up a Purwell Residents association which would include Chaucer Way and Hardy Close. The CDO agreed to report back to Members at the next meeting on progress with the Controlled Parking Zone in Radcliffe Road.

The Committee were pleased to commend the work of the CDO and noted the many activities and progress of voluntary groups in Hitchin since the last meeting.

RESOLVED: That the information provided by the Community Development Officer on activities since the last meeting of the Hitchin Committee held on 25 September 2007 be noted.

REASON FOR DECISIONS:

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

77. ANNUAL GRANTS, DEVELOPMENT, DISCRETIONARY AND VISIONING BUDGET 2007-2008

The Committee considered the current expenditure and balance of the Annual Grants, Development, Discretionary and Visioning budget for 2007 – 2008.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the expenditure, allocations, and balance of the current 2007-2008 Development Budget, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be noted;
- (2) That the Community Development Officer be requested to enter into discussions with the Head of Financial Services concerning the viability of transferring the balance of funds in the Capital Visioning Budget 2007-2008 to the Discretionary Development Budget for 2007-2008.

REASON FOR DECISIONS:

To advise the Hitchin Committee of funds remaining for disbursement in the year 2007-2008.

The meeting closed at 10.30 p.m.

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Chairman