

Public Document Pack

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

HITCHIN COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 27TH JUNE, 2017

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

Please find attached supplementary papers relating to the above meeting, as follows:

Agenda No	Item
------------------	-------------

- | | |
|-----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 11. | <u>WARD MATTERS AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS - MEMBERS' REPORTS (Pages 1 - 2)</u> |
|-----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

To receive any oral reports from Members regarding Ward matters and Outside Organisations.

This page is intentionally left blank

Hitchin Committee 27 June 2017

Progress Report regarding Minute 71 (4) of 7 March 2017

Play Areas in Hitchin

Councillor Harwood and I were asked to look into all aspects of seeking alternatives to closing play areas in Hitchin, including considering out-of-the-box thinking. We would ask you to **note** the information below and look forward to reporting more fully to the Hitchin Committee on September 5.

We have made preliminary enquiries with a view to discussing costings of maintaining play areas under threat of closure in order that the Committee and other interested parties are able to consider alternatives. We expect to speak to relevant members and officers in the coming weeks.

I have also had a meeting with Norma Atlay to discuss the ways open to the Council to ensure services are provided in unparished areas such as Hitchin, which are provided by Parish Councils in other areas.

Because there is potential unfairness between the unparished areas and the parishes, there can be two approaches:

Where the Council provides services that it doesn't provide to parishes it can recompense the parishes (we have done this in the past through "Parish Challenge").

Alternatively, the Council can declare "Special Expenses" to pay for the services in the unparished areas (see Appendix below). When calculating the Council Tax figure, the estimate of the costs of the special services is deducted from the figure applied to the whole District and applied only to the relevant area(s). In other words, there would be a small additional precept in the unparished area, rather similar to a parish precept. It is interesting that several other Hertfordshire authorities use or have used Special Expenses for services like parks and recreation grounds.

There is some discussion as to whether part of a service could be paid for by special expenses (e.g. just the play areas), but there seem to be examples of Districts where this is the case, including cases where percentages were calculated of different areas use of a service. There is a need to delve further into the details, but clearly this is one approach the Committee could pursue in dialogue with the portfolio holder.

Martin Stears-Handscomb June 2017

APPENDIX

The following is an excerpt from government guidance available through the internet:

- A special expense item is an item which relates to only part of the district council's area.
- In order for expenses incurred in performing any function of a district council to be special expenses, the function must be carried out by the district in only part of its area, and the same function must be carried out in another part of the district by one or more parish councils.
- Special expenses are identified by a resolution of the district council.

This page is intentionally left blank