

Public Document Pack

24 November 2017

Our Ref Hitchin Committee 05.12.17
Your Ref.
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To: Members of the Committee: Councillor Nicola Harris (Chairman), Councillor Ian Albert (Vice-Chairman), Councillor Judi Billing, Councillor Paul Clark, Councillor Elizabeth Dennis, Councillor Simon Harwood, Councillor Bernard Lovewell, Councillor Alan Millard, Councillor Frank Radcliffe, Councillor Ray Shakespeare-Smith, Councillor Adrian Smith, Councillor Martin Stears-Handscorn and Councillor Richard Thake

You are invited to attend a

MEETING OF THE HITCHIN COMMITTEE

to be held in the

HITCHIN BOYS SCHOOL, GRAMMAR SCHOOL WALK, HITCHIN

On

TUESDAY, 5TH DECEMBER, 2017 AT 7.30 PM

PRECEDED BY TOWN TALK 6.30PM – 7.15PM

Yours sincerely,



David Miley
Democratic Services Manager

Agenda **Part I**

Item	Page
1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	
2. MINUTES - 5 SEPTEMBER 2017 To take as read and approve as a true record the minutes of the meeting of this Committee held on the 5 September 2017.	(Pages 1 - 12)
3. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS Members should notify the Chairman of other business which they wish to be discussed by the Committee at the end of the business set out in the agenda. They must state the circumstances which they consider justify the business being considered as a matter of urgency. The Chairman will decide whether any item(s) raised will be considered.	
4. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS Members are reminded that any declarations of interest in respect of any business set out in the agenda, should be declared as either a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or Declarable Interest and are required to notify the Chairman of the nature of any interest declared at the commencement of the relevant item on the agenda. Members declaring a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest must withdraw from the meeting for the duration of the item. Members declaring a Declarable Interest which requires they leave the room under Paragraph 7.4 of the Code of Conduct, can speak on the item, but must leave the room before the debate and vote.	
5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION To receive presentations and petitions from members of the public including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">1. Herts and Essex Ambulance Service;2. Hitchin Hackspace;3. Hitchin Interfaith Forum;4. Hitchin Hedgehog Care;5. Hitchin Stroke Group.	
6. GRANTS AND COMMUNITY UPDATE REPORT OF THE COMMUNITIES MANAGER	(Pages 13 - 24)
To update the Committee on the activities and actions of the Communities Officer, to advise on the current expenditure and balances of the delegated budgets and to consider applications for grant funding.	

- 7. UPDATE REGARDING THE ONGOING MAINTENANCE OF AREAS OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPORTANCE** (Pages 25 - 44)
REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LEISURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

To provide the committee an update regarding the progress and development of the areas of environmental sensitivity, including Local Nature Reserves, within the area of Hitchin.

- 8. INFORMATION NOTE - GREEN SPACE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY** (Pages 45 - 58)
INFORMATION NOTE OF THE HEAD OF LEISURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

To provide an update regarding the steps taken and the progress made in identifying interested groups and organisations to safely provide play area facilities previously provided by the Council.

- 9. THE BID RENEWAL PROCESS**
To receive an oral presentation from the Democratic Services Manager regarding the BID renewal process.

- 10. HITCHIN TOWN CENTRE MANAGER**
To receive an oral presentation from the Hitchin Town Centre Manager

- 11. WARD MATTERS AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS - MEMBERS' REPORTS**
To receive any oral reports from Members regarding Ward matters and Outside Organisations.

- 12. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AT FUTURE MEETINGS**
To receive suggestions for Items to be discussed at future meetings from Members of the Committee

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Agenda Item 2

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

HITCHIN COMMITTEE

MEETING HELD IN THE PETER MORRISON HALL, BENSLOW MUSIC SCHOOL,
BENSLOW LANE, HITCHIN ON TUESDAY, 5 SEPTEMBER, 2017 AT 7.30 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors Councillor Ian Albert (Vice-Chairman), Judi Billing, Paul Clark, Elizabeth Dennis, Simon Harwood, Bernard Lovewell, Alan Millard, Ray Shakespeare-Smith, Martin Stears-Handscomb and Richard Thake*

In Attendance:

Colin Broadhurst (Licensing Officer), Claire Morgan (Communities Officer) and Hilary Dineen (Committee and Member Services Officer)

Also Present:

At the commencement of the meeting approximately 14 members of the public.

23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Nicola Harris (Chairman), Frank Radcliffe and Adrian Smith.

24 MINUTES - 27 JUNE 2017

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 27 June 2017 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

25 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business notified.

26 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (1) The Vice-Chairman thanked all who had attended Town Talk;
- (2) The Vice-Chairman welcomed all present at the meeting, particularly those who had attended to give a presentation;
- (3) The Vice-Chairman informed those present that, in accordance with Council Policy the meeting would be audio recorded;
- (4) The Vice-Chairman drew attention to the item on the agenda front pages regarding Declarations of Interest and reminded Members that, in line with the Code of Conduct, any Declarations of Interest needed to be declared immediately prior to the item in question.

27 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - HAMMERSMATCH

Mr Paul Payne, Blue Otter Limited, had given his apologies that he would be unable to attend the meeting.

28 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - HITCHIN TOWN TWINNING ASSOCIATION

Councillor Claire Strong and Mr Robert Lord thanked the Vice-Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding Hitchin Town Twinning Association.

Councillor Strong advised that she was the Council's representative on Hitchin Town Twinning Association along with Councillor Albert and that they attended meetings of that organisation.

Hitchin was twinned with two Towns, being Nuits St George, France and Bingen, Germany.

The Association held approximately three major fund raising activities each year including a Bingen Wine Evening, a barbeque in the summer and a French Evening.

The 60th anniversary of twinning between Hitchin and Bingen would take place during 2018 and to celebrate the event the Mayor of Bingen would be presenting Hitchin with 10 – 15 rose bushes.

The wish was to find a prominent place for these rose bushes to be planted.

NHDC Grounds Maintenance had suggested two locations being a new rose garden in Bancroft Gardens or at the Biggin and she was seeking the opinion of the Committee regarding these, or alternative locations.

The Twinning Association was hoping to hold an event to mark the anniversary, which may be a dinner event at Hitchin Town Hall.

Councillors considered various options including that planting of the roses at the Biggin could form part of a larger transformation of that area and a suggestion that the grassed area outside of the Library could be considered, although it should be noted that work was due to start on enhancing the library and therefore this might not be the right place.

Councillor Strong advised that she would be making further enquiries regarding the variety and number of rose bushes that would be presented as well as the timing of their arrival.

She asked that any further suggestions be communicated to her in the next few weeks.

The Vice-Chairman thanked Councillor Strong and Mr Lord for their presentation.

29 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - RHYTHMS OF THE WORLD

Mr Michael Woodward and Mr Andrew Harper, Trustees, thanked the Vice-Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding Rhythms of the World.

Mr Woodward thanked NHDC and the people of North Herts for their continued support of Rhythms of the World.

He advised that 2015 had been a challenging year, but with the support of the public, volunteers and grant funding from Hitchin Committee they had retained a presence in the town in 2016, which had been their 25th year in Hitchin.

2016 had been on a much smaller scale, but had included an all day event at St Marys Church in June and a Family Day in July.

Through fundraising and donations and very careful financial management Rhythms of the World was very much solvent and stable financially.

Despite this, due to the financial risk and the loss of some volunteers, it was decided not to put on a major event in 2017.

In order to regroup and re-establish, a public appeal was launched for volunteers. A public meeting was held from which emerged a new cohort of enthused volunteers and a structure that could take the organisation forward.

The public response had been that the people of Hitchin wanted Rhythms of the World to continue and wanted the major event to be a town event for the community of Hitchin.

The Trustees were returning Rhythms of the World to its roots by incorporating into the organisations objectives they wished to promote cultural diversity, the arts, cultural education and community.

Mr Woodward asked that the Committee continue to give their support and encouragement to the organisation.

Mr Harper advised that the new structure of the organisation included people with a lot of experience, however they did not wish to overstretch themselves by organising too many events and therefore would be concentrating their efforts on providing a single, smaller scale event in 2018.

It was hoped that they would be able to announce where this would be held and what format it would take in the near future.

They had organised a small event to be held on 30 September 2017 at Westmill Community Centre. This would be an all day event organised in partnership with Westmill Community Centre which would include sports, workshops and bands.

Members were pleased that Rhythms of the World had a good attendance at their public meeting and commented that the last major event had stretched the organisation both financially and with other resources. They were pleased to note that Rhythms of the World was re-emerging with smaller, more manageable events in the Town Centre and were fully supportive of this approach.

Members asked that Rhythms of the World return to this Committee in the near future to report on progress.

The Vice-Chairman thanked Mr Woodward and Mr Harper for their presentation.

30 FEASIBILITY STUDY RE LINK ROAD OFF STOTFOLD ROAD UPDATE

County Councillors Derrick Ashley and Judi Billing thanked the Vice-Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding their work surrounding a feasibility study regarding a link road off Stotfold Road.

County Councillor Ashley informed Members that for many years there had been recognition that access to the employment area of Hitchin was not ideal.

The Hitchin Urban District Transport Plan was developed approximately 5 years ago included an additional access to this area was one of the long term objectives.

County Councillors Billing and Ashley spent £10,000 each out of their discretionary budget to fund a feasibility study, which had recently been published.

This study had concluded that it was feasible to put in a link from the Stotfold Road into the employment area, utilising the land beneath the railway viaduct.

The County Council recognised that due to the expected growth of the town, as identified in the emerging Local Plan and to alleviate associated traffic issues, some work would need to be carried out in this area. The estimated cost of these works was approximately £5 million.

Should any scenarios arise through the planning process that identifies that the road should be built, there was now a feasibility study in place to show that it was possible.

Councillor Ashley stated that they would appreciate the support of Hitchin Committee to pursue the implementation of this scheme.

County Councillor Judi Billing advised that she had witnessed the residential blight along Grove Road and surrounding areas in terms of safety, air quality and family life caused by the traffic in the area.

They had used some imagination in using Locality Highway Budget funding for a strategic project rather than laying road surfaces.

Councillor Billing asked Members to support the proposed scheme that would benefit the people of Hitchin.

Members asked whether the feasibility study considered any traffic calming or other measure to prevent lorries transiting through the town from the M1 and whether it considered the traffic issues on the Stotfold Road towards Willian.

County Councillor Ashley advised that the feasibility study was the first stage and that should the project come to fruition, it would provide another access to the employment area which would alleviate the congestion on the Stotfold Road and would dilute the current problems in the Grove Road area all for a relative small amount of money.

In respect of the Stotfold Road towards Willian, Councillor Ashley advised that the feasibility study was a discreet element that would not necessarily affect anything else, however this could become part of a wider strategic jigsaw.

A Member referred to the temporary haul road that had been installed to carry heavy vehicles during the construction of the railway curve and the concerns raised at that time regarding the dangers associated with heavy vehicles climbing the hill, He suggested that some possible objections to this scheme could be overcome by making it clear that heavy vehicles would be directed on to the A505. It was important to ensure that there were as few barriers as possible to getting agreement both Letchworth and Hitchin to the scheme going forward.

Members referred to the proposed development at Highover Farm and commented that the access to this development should be considered carefully and that this Committee had expressed a desire to see the brief for the site before the planning stage was reached.

County Councillor Ashley advised that there were 22 strategic housing sites in the County, all of which had issues regarding traffic and access. He informed Members that in order to progress any proposal regarding traffic solutions it had to be backed by a policy document, and in this case, the Hitchin Transport Plan had identified this solution as a long term objective.

Members queried whether any other access route had been considered

County Councillor Ashley advised that the study had only looked at the feasibility of an additional access into the employment area an improvement of circulation around the employment area.

The Vice-Chairman thanked County Councillors Ashley and Billing for their presentation.

It was proposed and seconded and:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Committee and Member Services Officer be requested to circulate the Feasibility Study into the creation of a link road from Stotfold Road to the employment area in Hitchin;
- (2) That the Hitchin Committee supports the principal of a link road between Stotfold Road and the employment area in Hitchin, as detailed in the feasibility study;
- (3) That the Development and Conservation Manager be requested to provide a report to this Committee regarding the proposed Highover Farm development, prior to any planning application being considered, to enable this Committee to consider the infrastructure implications of that development.
- (4) That the Committee and Member Services Officer be requested to forward a copy of this Minute to the Development and Conservation Manager

REASON FOR DECISION: To inform Members of the Hitchin Committee about the detail included in the feasibility study into the creation of a link road from Stotfold Road to the employment area of Hitchin.

31 HIGHWAYS MATTERS

North Hertfordshire Highways Liaison Meeting

Members noted that the North Hertfordshire Highways Liaison Meeting had not met since 31 October 2016 and that these meetings were due to be held twice yearly. This matter had been brought to the attention of the Chairman of that Meeting and Members queried when the next meeting might take place.

B656 – Park Street

Members commented that the road near the Three Moorhens was difficult and unsafe to manoeuvre and needed attention. They noted that a pedestrian crossing had been installed.

It was proposed and seconded that this Committee supports the issuing of a prescriptive notice regarding the safety of this section of road by NHDC that would require Highways to deal with the issues.

Junction Cambridge Road/William Road

Members commented that the area around this junction was constantly flooding and that the drains in the area did not seem to be coping with the capacity of rainfall as they seemed to be blocked.

This area was dangerous for both pedestrians and car drivers, particularly when it rained.

Members noted that there was a programme of gully cleansing in place, but that there did not seem to be any priority given to areas at risk of flooding such as this.

Members were advised that there was list of sensitive areas held at County Hall and that this should be added to that list.

County Councillor Billing was asked to take this matter forward.

Sustainable Transport

County Councillor Ashley advised that there were some 90,000 new dwelling planned for Hertfordshire and that there was an increasing consensus that work was needed to provide more sustainable transport and that there was a lot of work emerging regarding this issue

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Chief Executive be requested to take the necessary steps to issue a prescriptive notice regarding the safety of the B656 – Park Street, in the vicinity of the Three Moorhens, that would require Hertfordshire Highways to take action in order to deal with the issues;
- (2) That County Councillor Billing be requested to ask Highways Officer to add the Junction of Cambridge Road/Willian Road to the list of sensitive areas, prone to flooding that require additional gully cleaning.

REASON FOR DECISION: To improve safety on the road and pathways in Hitchin.

32 GRANTS AND COMMUNITY UPDATE

The Communities Officer presented the report entitle Grants and Community Update and drew attention to the following:

Town Twinning Roses

The Ground Maintenance Team had offered some suggestions for the placement of the rose bushes that were due to be presented as follows:

Bancroft Gardens:

Hitchin Library;

The Biggin and

Smithsons Recreation Ground, although this was a little way out of the Town Centre.

If Members had any preferences or suggestions could they please advise both the Town Twinning Association and Communities Officer.

Mention had also been made of a plaque to be placed with the rose bushes to explain that they had been presented

The costs of planting, based on 20 rose bushes was £120 and the cost of any plaque would need to be paid for from the Area Committee budget, although maintenance of the rose bushes would come from the grounds maintenance budget.

Permission had also been given to use the ceremonial silver spade to plant the bushes.

Flagpoles

The Communities Officer had investigated the possibility of moving the flagpole from outside the British Legion building to a more suitable location, however officers had advised that this flagpole was not of a suitable condition to move it and that repairs would be more expensive than purchasing a new one.

Historical evidence had been found that there was once a flagpole in the Market Square and, following consultation with the Town Centre Manager regarding whether to reintroduce a flagpole in this area, it was decided that the most suitable place would be near the Cabbies Hut.

There was an existing flagpole, used by NHDC, on Hitchin Town Hall.

It would cost approximately £1,500 to purchase and install a new flagpole in the Market Square.

Members thanked the Communities Officer for her research regarding the flagpole but decided that the flagpole at Hitchin Town Hall should be used and that they did not wish any further work to be undertaken in respect of a flagpole in Hitchin Market Square.

Section 106 Contributions

The Communities Officer had been approached regarding a process for the Area Committee to have an input into suggestions for the allocation of future S106 funding.

Members were asked to contact the Communities Officers with any projects or requirements that are needed in an area. The Communities Officers would keep a list of these suggestions, which would then be fed into the Section 106 process if any planning applications for that area were submitted.

Members commented that MHDC should implement the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), as well as Section 106 contributions, so that every single dwelling, whether it was a single build or a housing estate, contributed to the infrastructure in that area.

The Committee and Member Services Officer reminded Members that Section 106 contributions could not be negotiated without a specific project to negotiate for.

Members were supportive of the idea to start a list of projects and asked the Communities Officer to do so.

Grant Applications

The Communities Officer advised Members that she had received no grant applications for this meeting and commented that organisations had only started to apply for funding for Christmas events after the deadline for this meeting. This meant that many of those events would take place before any decision could be made regarding grant funding.

Members commented that the number of meetings of this Committee had been reduced and smaller organisations were not always aware of the requirements and deadlines regarding grant finding. This meant that groups were sometimes disadvantaged and they queried whether authority for these grants could be delegated.

The Communities Officer advised that delegation of grant funding had ceased as it was not in the Council's constitution to allow it to happen.

It was proposed and seconded that the Monitoring Officer be requested to consider changes to the Council's Constitution to allow small grants to be agreed by Area Committee Chairmen and Vice Chairmen where an event would take place prior to the next meeting of the Area Committee and that each Committee agree, on an annual basis the parameters for that delegation.

Members were encouraged to speak to organisations to advise them that grant funding was available and that they should contact the Communities Officer for help and guidance, also to signpost them to their County Councillors as an alternative or additional grant funding source.

Bench outside Hitchin Town Hall

It had been agreed that a bench could be placed outside of Hitchin Town Hall. Two options were being considered, firstly to clean up the old bench and replace it and the other to purchase a new bench to be installed.

The estimated cost of purchasing a new bench and installing it was £2,000 and the Community Officer suggested that the Committee consider allocating this amount in the Committee Budget. If it was then possible to clean the old bench for less money the balance would be returned to the base budget.

Members were very supportive of this being moved forward as quickly as possible.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That all grants be allocated from the 2016/17 carry over amount of £10,570, until it is depleted;

- (2) That the Committee endorses the actions taken by the Community Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being for Hitchin;
- (3) That the Communities Officer be requested to start and maintain a list of future projects to be used by Planning Officers when negotiating for Section 106 contributions;
- (4) That the Monitoring Officer be requested to consider changes to the Council's Constitution to allow small grants to be delegated to Area Committee Chairmen and Vice Chairmen where an event would take place prior to the next meeting of the Area Committee and that each Committee agree, on an annual basis, the parameters for that delegation.
- (5) That £2,000 be allocated from the 2016/17 base budget to provide a bench outside of Hitchin Town Hall.

REASON FOR DECISION: To keep Members of the Committee apprised of the latest developments in community activities in Hitchin.

33 **CONSULTATION IN RELATION TO THE PROPOSED STREET TRADING POLICY 2018 - 2025**

Councillor Judi Billing declared a Declarable Interest as she was a Director of Hitchin Initiative. This was not a pecuniary interest and therefore she would remain in the room for the debate and any vote.

The Licensing Officer presented a report in respect of the proposed Street Trading Policy 2018-2025. He advised that consultation had commenced on a revised Policy, part of which was to seek the views of Area Committees.

By way of background, the Licensing Officer explained that the Council had adopted the appropriate Street Trading legislation in 2005. In Street Trading terms, a "street" was a road, footway or other areas to which the public had free access (eg. car parks, shopping arcades). Street Trading was the selling of goods that could be purchased and taken away at the time of purchase.

The Licensing Officer further explained that Charter Markets were exempt from Street Trading, as were shops that displayed some of their wares outside their frontages. Typically, Street Trading covered burger vans, ice cream vans, ad hoc markets and community events. In this latter regard, he stated that the revised Policy sought to continue to those parts of the existing Policy which provided encouragement for community events.

The Licensing Officer advised that the Council was able to designate streets as consent streets, where its consent was required to be able to trade within such streets; prohibited streets, where trading would not be permitted at any time; or not to designate at all. In 2005, the Council had chosen to designate as consent streets all streets within the District's four main towns and the arterial roads which linked them. Village roads/streets had been excluded from such designation.

The Licensing Officer commented that the Policy did not contain any prohibited streets, but appended to it was a list of streets where consent would not normally be granted.

In respect of Advertising Boards (A Boards) and tables and chairs outside restaurants/cafes, the Licensing Officer confirmed that those matters did not fall within the remit of street trading, but were instead the responsibility of Hertfordshire County Council under the Highways Act 1980.

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The Licensing Officer stated that the main objective of the Policy was to protect the public from unregulated street traders. The Policy also aimed to make things easier for community events to go ahead without having to go through the same process as commercial operators. Accordingly, it was possible for an annual Town Centre consent to be issued to an appropriate Town Centre organisation (such as a BID company or Community Events Forum), so that all community or commercial operators wishing to trade within the town could approach the Town Centre organisation for permission to use their annual consent. A cost could be levied on a commercial operator for use of the consent, with no charge for not-for-profit community organisations.

Members commented that a number of issues not covered by this policy caused problems in Hitchin Town Centre including trading outside of shops such as cafes, which created problems when they spread onto the footways and the proliferation of A boards placed on the footways and in the roads, which had been a constant issue.

The Licensing Officer advised that A boards and tables and chairs on footways and roads came under the purview of Hertfordshire County Council.

Members commented that the County Council did not take any enforcement action regarding these issues and queried why NHDC could not take on the responsibility of these issues from Hertfordshire District Council and then be delegated to the Town Centre Managers.

Members asked for a report on this issue that specifically addressed the reasons that this could not be achieved.

Councillor Lovewell, whose Portfolio included this issue advised that NHDC had tried many times to persuade Hertfordshire County Council to transfer responsibility for A board to NHDC together with the funds to undertake that responsibility but this had been resisted by the County Council

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report entitled Consultation in Relation to the Proposed Street Trading Policy 2018-2025 be noted;
- (2) That the Licensing Manager be requested to produce a report that addresses the reasons that responsibility for A boards and outside shop trading, such as cafes could not be transferred from Hertfordshire County Council to North Herts District Council and then delegated to the Town Centre Managers.

REASON FOR DECISION: To provide local input into the proposed Street Trading Policy 2018-2025.

34 HITCHIN TOWN CENTRE MANAGER

Mr Keith Hoskins, Hitchin Town Centre Manager, had offered apologies that he was unable to attend this meeting.

35 UPDATE ON THE GREEN SPACE STRATEGY - PLAY AREAS

Councillor Martin Stears-Handscorn reminded Members that, they had discussed the Green Space Strategy at a previous meeting and had concluded that they did not wish any of the play areas to have the play equipment removed in Hitchin and that the Committee had requested that he work with Councillor Simon Harwood to think of innovative ways for the Hitchin Committee to support the play areas.

They had reported back to the meeting of this Committee held on 27 June 2017 regarding the mechanism of Special Expenses, which was a way in which Council Tax could be added to un-parished areas in the same way that a parish precept was charged.

They had also considered whether it was practical, both feasibly and financially, to get a group together to take over one or more of the play areas.

Councillors Harwood and Stears-Handscomb had met with the Executive Member for Leisure and the relevant officers, who had given them a very courteous hearing and given them a lot of information and were extremely helpful;

The Executive Member and officers were keen to encourage any community groups to take on the areas, which would in turn help the Council, in that the less play areas there were the more the maintenance costs for each of them.

Councillor Harwood advised that he had investigated further methods of financial support for both the capital costs such as replacing the equipment and revenue costs such as maintenance.

The result of his enquiries were that there was a way to fund capital costs through Special Expenses and there was a way, through grant funding from this Committee to fund revenue costs.

There were benefits in using the Councils current maintenance programme, not only in that the costs would likely be lower using Council contractors than using independent ones, but that the Council service would include relevant insurances required.

The Council had a lot of information about the usage of play areas and different types of equipment and it was important that community groups recognised that there were different types of play areas, with not all of them needing high value, complicated play equipment,

It was important to not only focus efforts on the play areas where equipment was recommended for removal, but to consider those play areas where the equipment was nearing the end of its maintainable usefulness and would need to be replaced in 4 to 5 years time. Ignoring these play areas could result in being in the same situation again when these are due for replacement.

Councillor Stears-Handscomb advised that they had provided more details in the paperwork and that he wished to propose the following two recommendations:

1. That Hitchin Committee consider whether to ask Cabinet to recommend to Council that Special Expenses be used to retain the three play areas designated for removal of equipment.
2. That Hitchin Committee ask officers to encourage an interested group to come forward, initially to take on running the three play areas designated for removal of equipment.

Members acknowledged that, although there were some play areas that had more support than others, it was important to consider the wider picture and work together to protect as many play areas as possible, both now and those that may be vulnerable in the future.

They recognised that it was really difficult to find community groups to take on these play areas and questioned whether this could be due to the lack of resources or the lack of support offered to the community groups to explain how they could make it work.

Members expressed concern that children across the District would be left without play areas for the future.

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They queried how this was being marketed and whether there were better ways of proactively seeking community groups. They acknowledged that there was a lot of information available, but that a short sharp one page leaflet may help encourage groups and questioned whether the Communities Team could proactively seek groups.

They also queried whether established groups such as the Hitchin Society and Hitchin BID Manager had been approached

The Communities Officer advised that, in respect of marketing, Members should contact the Communications Department and that there was not the capacity for officers to go out into the community looking for groups to take on the play areas however where a group or individual has made any type of enquiry, officers had worked with them. She confirmed that established groups had been approached regarding this.

Members acknowledged that, even where a subject raises a passionate response from people, very few people were willing or able to actually be involved.

Members agreed that Councillors Harwood and Stears-Handscomb should be asked to speak to Cabinet on behalf of Hitchin Committee regarding their findings and recommendations This would demonstrate the cross party work being undertaken, which may add weight to the presentation.

The Vice-Chairman thanked Councillors Harwood and Stears-Handscomb for their work.

Upon the vote it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Councillors Harwood and Stears-Handscomb be requested to make a presentation to Cabinet regarding their findings and recommendations in respect of play areas;
- (2) That Hitchin Committee supports the recommendation made by Councillors Harwood and Stears-Handscomb as follows:

"That Cabinet be requested to recommend to Council that Special Expenses be used to retain the three play areas in Hitchin designated for removal of equipment.
- (3) That officers be requested to encourage an interested group to come forward, initially to take on running the three play areas in Hitchin designated for removal of equipment.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Hitchin Committee to consider ways in which it can support play areas in Hitchin.

36 UPDATE FROM THE MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR HITCHIN AND HARPENDEN

Members received a written update from Bim Afolami, Member of Parliament for Hitchin and Harpenden.

37 WARD MATTERS AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS - MEMBERS' REPORTS

Hitchin Boys School Planning Application

Councillor Simon Harwood informed Members that this planning application had been very challenging and that there was always going to be a loser in the process.

In this case the application for building works at the Boys School was approved.

The Dell

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Councillor Elizabeth Dennis advised that the covenants relating to the Dell, that currently prevented the area from being used as an outdoor theatre, were slightly more complicated than anticipated.

The legal avenues required funding, although there was a non-legal avenue, which involved contacting the family to ask if they would be happy for there to be an open air theatre.

Street Cleansing

Councillor Stears-Handscomb asked that it be brought to the attention of the Waste and Recycling Department that some street cleansing consisted of only sweeping the middle of the road.

38 ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AT FUTURE MEETINGS

Hitchin BID Renewal

Members requested that the Democratic Services Manager be requested to provide a report regarding the processes and regulations regarding the Hitchin BID renewal.

Items for future meetings

Hitchin Market

The District Museum

Churchgate

RESOLVED: That the Democratic Services Manager be requested to present a written or verbal report to this Committee that outlined the processes and regulations regarding the upcoming renewal of the Hitchin BID.

The meeting closed at 9.21 pm

Chairman

**HITCHIN COMMITTEE
5 DECEMBER 2017**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

6

TITLE OF REPORT: GRANTS AND COMMUNITY UPDATE

REPORT OF THE COMMUNITIES MANAGER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND RURAL AFFAIRS

PRIORITY: ATTRACTIVE AND THRIVING / PROSPER AND PROTECT / RESPONSIVE AND EFFICIENT

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To advise the Committee on the current expenditure and balances of the Area Committee budgets.
- 1.2 To bring to the Committee's attention details of recent requests received for Area Committee Grant Funding, made by community groups and local organisations, which conform to the Authority's Grants Policy approved by Cabinet on June 14th 2016.
- 1.3 To advise the Committee of the activities and schemes with which the Community Officer has been involved.
- 1.4 To bring to the Committee's attention some important community based activities that will take place during the next few months.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Committee considers allocating funding from their discretionary community budget towards the projects below:
 - 2.1.1 £650 to Herts & Essex air ambulance service towards the cost of purchase and installation of a defibrillator attached to their new charity shop in Churchgate, as outlined in 8.1.1
 - 2.1.2 £5,000 to Hitchin Hackspace for renovation of the former Bancroft Toilet block, as outlined in 8.1.2
 - 2.1.3 £984 to the Hitchin Interfaith Forum, towards the cost of purchase and installation of a picnic table bench in the Peace Garden at the Hitchin Friends meeting house, as outlined in 8.1.3
 - 2.1.4 £592 to Hitchin Hedgehog Care for specialist equipment needed to care for sick hedgehogs to enable their release back to the wild, as outlined in 8.1.4
 - 2.1.5 £1000 to Hitchin Stroke Group towards transport and venue hire as outlined in 8.1.5

- 2.2 That the Committee endorses the actions taken by the Community Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being for Hitchin.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To ensure the Committee is kept informed of the work of the Community Officer.
- 3.2 This report is intended to inform Members of the financial resources available to the Committee. It draws attention to the current budgetary situation by assisting in the effective financial management of the Area Committee's budget. This ensures that all actions are performed in line with the Authority's Financial Regulations, the Council's Constitution, and the guidance of the existing Grants policy as agreed by Cabinet in June 2016.
- 3.3 The awarding of financial assistance to voluntary organisations and the use of discretionary spending allows the Committee to further the aims of the Corporate Plan.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 There are no alternative options being proposed other than those detailed within the text of this report. However in the course of debate at committee, Members may wish to comment and offer additional views on any of the items included within this report.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1 Consultation with Members has occurred in connection with the allocation of funds for Community Projects
- 5.2 Consultation with the respective officers and external bodies/groups has taken place with regard to funding proposals for Area Committee Funds.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 Members are asked to note the information detailed in Appendix A Hitchin Area Committee Budget Spread sheet, which relates to the Area Committee budget balances for 2017/18.
- 7.2 The spreadsheet also details pre-allocated sums carried forward from the previous financial years, including balances and past expenditure relating to the allocated and unallocated Area Capital Visioning Budgets available to the Committee.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 Grant Applications

8.1.1 Essex & Herts Air Ambulance Charity Shop

The Essex & Herts Air Ambulance unlike NHS emergency services is a charity providing a free life-saving Helicopter Emergency Service for the critically ill and injured across the local area.

The charity has launched a defibrillator project and has committed to installing Public Access Defibrillators (PADs) on the outside of, or close to all of its charity shops.

The charity is planning to open a charity shop based in Churchgate in Hitchin Town Centre and are requesting the cost of installing a PAD to the exterior of the premises.

A defibrillator is a computerised medical device used when a person experiences sudden cardiac arrest. The defibrillator delivers an electrical current through the chest which aims to shock the heart back in to a normal rhythm, allowing it to pump again. Sudden cardiac arrest is one of the UK's largest killers and the potential for saving a life is dependent on time. The chances of survival decrease by 7-10% with every minute so, the faster medical help can be given the better the chance of survival.

The charity are requesting £650 to purchase and install the equipment that could save lives of those people living, working or visiting the town centre.

It is suggested that if successful the funding would be released following the receipt of written confirmation of the charity shop opening.

8.1.2 Hitchin Hackspace

Hitchin Hackspace is a community organisation devoted to providing everyone with a place to explore all kinds of creative technologies and crafts. Their members learn new practical and technical skills, make their own designs and repair items, either for themselves or others in the wider community.

Having used a hut based at Ransoms Recreation Ground, Hitchin Hackspace has now signed a 5 year lease with North Hertfordshire District Council to operate from the former toilet block adjacent to Bancroft recreation ground. However, the building requires refurbishment and renovation, internally and externally before it can be used in order to transform the disused, dilapidated structure into a vibrant community hub.

Hackspace volunteers will be under taking as much of the manual work themselves as they are able. Specialists will be brought in as required to undertake electrical and plumbing work. In this way the group aim to keep their labour costs to a minimum but require funding towards the purchase of materials and qualified trades people when appropriate.

Hitchin Hackspace is working to encourage STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) subjects and 'making' within the North Hertfordshire community. They provide access to tools and knowledge that would otherwise be unavailable and invest in, and house a range of equipment - from woodworking tools to digital manufacturing tools such as laser cutters and 3D printers which are beyond the budget of individuals. The group also get involved in outreach work with local schools and youth groups.

The work on the facilities is expected to take 3-6months (finishing January – April 2018, depending on the proportion of volunteer effort versus funded contractors. The work and the majority of future member activities will be at the building on Bancroft. This work, even with the donation of in-kind volunteer hours to undertake the manual work, is estimated to cost in the region of £9,500.

Hitchin Hackspace has secured £2000 from Herts County Councillor's Locality budgets and £200 from Aviva Insurance. They are requesting £5,000 from Hitchin Area Committee towards these costs and continue to fundraise using a variety of activities.

8.1.3 Hitchin Interfaith Forum

The Hitchin Interfaith Forum were set up in 2011 to bring members of different faiths together, organise public meetings to discuss Inter-Faith matters and Inter-Faith walks in order to promote greater understanding between Faiths and diverse communities in Hitchin.

The Forum are requesting £983 towards the purchase of a recycled plastic picnic bench and seating unit to be installed in the Peace Garden at the Hitchin Friends Meeting house on the corner of Paynes Park and Bedford Road. The cost of the unit including a plaque explaining that was provided by the Hitchin Interfaith Forum and installation equates to £1,024 the Forum have raised £40 towards this at their AGM.

8.1.4 Hitchin Hedgehog Care

The organisation was set up to undertake the care and rehabilitation of sick, injured and orphaned hedgehogs in 2008, they have been constituted and listed with HMRC as a charitable organisation since 2016. (The organisation is too small to register with the Charities Commission).

The group wish to purchase an incubator for very young or very sick hedgehogs, a nebuliser for hedgehogs with breathing problems and a suction pump for removal of flystrike on hedgehogs.

The organisation is requesting £592 grant funding in order to purchase the above equipment.

The organisation continuously fund raise (so far £1,400 this year) which goes to cover running costs, vets bills, medication, food, medical disposables, cleaning materials etc.

Members may be aware that hedgehogs are now on the UK's Endangered Species list, the numbers having fallen from an estimated 36,000,000 to around 1,000,000 today.

8.1.5 Hitchin Stroke Group

The Hitchin Stroke Group aims to improve the speech of stroke patients, let them meet other stroke patients and give carers two hours per week of free time. The group holds weekly, two-hour meetings at Anderson House, Florence Road, regarded by many of the clients as the highlight of their week. The group costs £1600 per year to operate and the majority of the costs are taken up with transport for the members to the club and hire of the venue. The group are requesting £1000 grant funding to continue for the next 12 months.

Hitchin Stroke Club welcomes membership from people affected by Stroke in the area. The club provides peer and communication support and offers social and recreational activities.

They require funding to continue to provide services to new and existing members living with the consequences of Stroke.

Members can self refer but many are referred by Lister Hospital.

Room hire represents 28% of the outgoings of the Group, with members' travel costs representing 56%. In terms of income, grants were 80% of income, and the remainder is generated via subscriptions.

This organisation receives no Rate Support or other formal benefits from NHDC.

In the last five years, this organisation has received the following awards:

02/09/2014 revenue support, £1,000

01/03/2016 Support costs for weekly 2-hour meetings, £1,000

Total awards: £2,000.

8.2 Update on Community Engagement

8.2.1 Bench outside Hitchin Town Hall and update on North Herts Museum

The Town Hall Manager has instructed maintenance staff to renovate the former bench that was situated on Brand Street prior to the renovation and building work on the Town Hall and Museum.

The original ends of the bench are being restored and new wooden slats have been ordered. The installation will take place shortly.

8.2.2 Community Facilities

The Communities Team have been working with both St Michaels and Walsworth Communities Centre on grant applications for capital funding needed for renovations to both buildings. This funding has now been allocated from the Community Facilities Grant Fund on condition of lease agreements being finalised. The lease agreements are in the final stages of legal agreement between the Community centres solicitor and the NHDC legal department and the funding will be released in the immediate future.

The Communities Officer is also working with the Walsworth Community Centre's fund raising sub-committee to advise them on fundraising activities generally and potential match funding streams.

8.3 Highways Matters

8.3.1 This section is included within the community update report for each committee cycle to facilitate debate and enable appropriate feedback on any of the proposed or listed Highways related schemes.

8.3.2 Any new proposals or revised schemes will be forwarded to the respective Herts County Councillor for consideration who will in turn report back and advise the Committee accordingly.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Section 9.8.2 (g) of Constitution in respect of Area Committees' Terms of Reference provides that they may: "establish and maintain relationships with outside bodies/voluntary organisations operating specifically with the area including, where appropriate, the provision of discretionary grant aid/financial support etc. but excluding grants for district-wide activities". The Area Committees also have delegated power under section 9.8.1 (a) & (b) to allocate discretionary budgets and devolved budgets within the terms determined by the Council and outlined in the current Grant Policy agreed by Cabinet in June 2016.

- 9.2 Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 provides a General Power of Competence which gives local authorities the powers to do anything:-
- An individual may generally do
 - Anywhere in the UK or elsewhere
 - For a commercial purpose or otherwise, for a charge or without a charge
 - Without the need to demonstrate that it will benefit the authority, its area or person's resident or present in its area.
- 9.3 Section 137 Local Government Act 1972 provides specific authority for the Council to incur expenditure on anything which is in the interests of and will bring direct benefit to its area. This includes a charity or other body operating for public service.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 As outlined in Appendix A Committee budget 2017/18:-
The agreed budget for this financial year is £19,600. In addition to £17,800 carried forward from 2016/17 equates to a total amount of £34,900 for the provision of Community Development Grants. As outlined in recommendation 2.2 all spending should be allocated from the carry over amount until it is depleted at which point funding shall be allocated from the 2017/18 budget.
- 10.2 At the last meeting of the Committee held in September £2,000 funding was allocated (from the 2016/17 carry forward amount) towards the cost of the installation of a Bench on Brand Street. This leaves a current carry forward from the 2016/17 budget of £8,570.
Should Members be minded to provide grant funding as requested under recommendation 2.1 the total awarded will equate to £8,226.
- 10.3 The Capital Visioning funds are now all been drawn down and utilised for redevelopment projects in Bancroft Gardens.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are no relevant risk entries that have been recorded on Pentana Performance, the Council's performance and risk system. Individual events should have their own risk assessments in place to mitigate any health and safety issues. Whenever a request for grant funding for equipment is received, the recipient of the funding will be advised to obtain insurance for the item to avoid a repeat request for funding in the event of the equipment being stolen or damaged. There are no pertinent risk implications for the Authority associated with any items within this report.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2 Area committee funding is awarded to community groups that clearly demonstrate positive impact on the community and wider environment. The projects outlined in this report seek to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

13.1 The Social Value Act and “go local” policy do not apply to this report.

14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

14.1 There are no pertinent Human Resource implications associated with any items within this report.

15. APPENDICES

15.1 Appendix A - 2017/18 financial year budget sheet

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17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

17.1 Review of Policies and Procedures for Financial Assistance to Voluntary and Community Organisations, November 2002.

17.2 Review of Grant Policy Cabinet June 2016

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HITCHIN AREA COMMITTEE BUDGET 2017/18**BUDGET BROUGHT FORWARD FROM 2016/17**

SUMMARY/ TOTALS	Funding	Allocated	Spent	Outstanding	Unallocated Budget
Capital Visioning	£26,403	£26,403	£26,403	£0	£0
Memorandum of Understanding	£5,000	£5,000	£3,597	£1,403	£0
Central Area Grants	£147,800	£9,230	£7,230	£2,000	£138,570
Total	£179,203	£40,633	£37,230	£3,403	£138,570

HITCHIN AREA COMMITTEE BUDGET 2017/18

SUMMARY/ TOTALS	Funding	Allocated	Spent	Outstanding	Unallocated Budget
Central Area Grants	£19,600	£0	£0	£0	£19,600
Total	£19,600	£0	£0	£0	£19,600

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HITCHIN AREA COMMITTEE BUDGET 2017/18

CAPITAL VISIONING	Funding	Project	Allocated	Date Allocated	Spent	Outstanding	Unallocated Budget		Comments
	£26,403	Bancroft Gardens	£26,403	15.08.06	£26,403	£0			Allocation at beginning of 11/12 £30,000 reduced by £3,597 to reallocate to other projects - agreed on 13.09.11
Total	£26,403		£26,403		£26,403	£0	£0		

	Funding	Project	Allocated	Date Allocated	Spent	Outstanding	Unallocated Budget		Comments
Pre allocated Funds Brought Forward from 2016/17	£5,000	Revenue Contribution to Bancroft Gardens	£2,400		£2,400	£0			
		Revenue Contribution to Bancroft Gardens	£2,600		£1,197	£1,403			
Total	£5,000		£5,000		£3,597	£1,403	£3,597		

DEVELOPMENT BUDGETS

Central Area Grants	Funding	Project	Allocated	Date Allocated	Spent	Outstanding	Unallocated Budget		Comments
Pre allocated Funds Brought Forward from 2016/17	£17,800	The Living Room	£2,500	07.03.17	£2,500	£0			
		Family Matters	£1,230	27.06.17	£1,230	£0			
		Small Talk - St Faith's Church	£500	27.06.17	£500	£0			
		Hitchin Senior Citizens	£3,000	27.06.17	£3,000	£0			
		Bench on Brand Street	£2,000	06.09.17	£0	£2,000			
Total	£17,800		£9,230		£7,230	£2,000	£8,570		

DEVELOPMENT BUDGETS

Central Area Grants	Funding	Project	Allocated	Date Allocated	Spent	Outstanding	Unallocated Budget		Comments
Base Budget 2017/18	£19,600								
Total	£19,600		£0		£0	£0	£19,600		

**HITCHIN COMMITTEE
5 DECEMBER 2017**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

7

TITLE OF REPORT: UPDATE REGARDING THE ONGOING MAINTENANCE OF AREAS OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPORTANCE

REPORT OF: THE HEAD OF LEISURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR WASTE, RECYCLING AND ENVIRONMENT

COUNCIL PRIORITY: ATTRACTIVE AND THRIVING / PROSPER AND PROTECT

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 To provide the committee an update regarding the progress and development of the areas of environmental sensitivity, including Local Nature Reserves, within the area of Hitchin.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 To note and discuss the evolution of the management plans for the next five years as they relate to Oughtonhead Common, Purwell Meadows and Burymead Springs. As such the Committee will be supporting the proposed Action Plans for each location.

2.2 To note the progress achieved to deliver the management plans for Walsworth Common, Cadwell Lane and St John's Cemetery.

2.3 To provide feedback and comments to officers.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The items within the previous Management Plans for Oughtonhead Common, Purwell Meadows have been delivered and these plans have now being updated with revised Action Plans identifying works for a further period of 5 years.

3.2 Actions identified for Walsworth Common, Cadwell Lane and St John's Cemetery have commenced and we are now part way through the delivery of the agreed 5 year management plans for these locations. This progress is for note only.

3.3 Burymead Springs was not available to public access for a period of time during the construction of the adjacent rail curve. Now that work is complete and the appropriate renovations are complete, the site is now available once more for the public to enjoy and a recent consultation exercise has refined proposals for the future management plan.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 Any alternative options were considered as part of the production process for the Greenspace Action Plan and have been already included or excluded as appropriate depending upon the location, environmental sensitivities and financial resources.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1 Please refer to Appendix D below for a detailed flow chart of the production process we have used for the creation of the Greenspace Action Plans for Oughtonhead Common, Purwell Meadows and Burymead Springs.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 **Oughtonhead Common** – works completed are the renovation of the fenland habitat, renewal of the fencing and enlargement of the grazing compartments and increasing the number of long horn cattle present on site. In 2016 the site regained its Greenflag accreditation
- 7.2 **Walsworth Common** – Countryside Management Services secured a £10,000 grant from Tesco's Bags for Life Scheme which has enabled the pond to be cleared and excavated. The areas of scrub encroachment to the rear of the Millstream PH have been reduced and cut back clearing large areas of grassland. The areas of vegetation along the river bank have been cut back as a fresh start to maintaining this habitat differently with areas of longer grass on both banks instead of a single river bank.
- 7.3 **Purwell Meadows** – The boundary fence line along Purwell Road has been replanted with a new hedge, the cattle coral has been replaced and relocated. Interpretation signage has been installed on site and also a scrape was excavated to permit the grazing cattle to cross the river without damaging the embankments. In 2015 the site gained Greenflag accreditation which is due for renewal in 2017.
- 7.4 **Burymead Springs** – The loss of this site for a number of years due to the development of the rail curve impacted significantly upon the delivery of the management plan for this site. However one of the criteria that were imposed upon the developer included the delivery of the actions identified within the action plan at that time. Network Rail as the developer have now completed the various elements contained within the management plan and have now handed the site back to North Herts for maintenance. Countryside Management Services have completed a process of consultation that has cumulated in the development of the forthcoming action plan.

- 7.5 **St John's Cemetery** – The maintenance of the older sections of the cemetery was adjusted so as to allow the area to be used as a garden of remembrance. As such areas were planted with bulbs and mowing schedules amended to encourage a wild meadow habitat. Additionally supplementary seating has been installed. The initial area has now been increase to include an adjacent second phase. This project has attracted significant attention which has helped to develop a very proactive volunteer group who now meet regularly at the cemetery to undertake ongoing maintenance tasks such as clearing ivy off memorials and maintaining the yew and box hedging.
- 7.6 **Cadwell Lane** – A new hedge line has been planted adjacent the boundary with the industrial estate. The riverside walk has been cleared of vegetation and opened up for visitors and the river has been de shaded by removing over hanging trees to encourage greater biodiversity in the watercourse.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 The next generation of updated Management Plans for Oughtonhead Common, Purwell Meadows and Burymead Springs are requiring renewal. As such the Action Plans for these locations are attached for further information and final comment. The Management Plans have been put out to public consultation during 2016 and 2017 with the comments received incorporated into the final document where ever reasonable and practical to do so.
- 8.2 Delivery of the existing Management Plans for Walsworth Common, Cadwell Lane and St John's Cemetery are currently in progress and we will be working towards the delivery of the identified actions in these locations.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The terms of reference for Hitchin Area Committee are set out in section 9.8.1 and 9.8.2 of the Council's Constitution.
- 9.2 Of particular relevance to this report are the Committee's functions "*To act as a forum for discussion on matters of local interest and in particular to elicit/hear the views of local bodies and organisations*" and "*To provide local input into centrally determined specifications for all services.*"

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no specific financial implications. If the funds can not be sourced from existing revenue or external grants funds the ambitions of the various Action Plans will not be met and will be rolled over into the next plan.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Any existing risks are already contained with current work programs and failure to deliver the identified action plans for each location would only delay the delivery of the identified works. Any negative impacts would be managed locally on each location as appropriate if the action plans are not completed.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2 There are no adverse impacts generated by the actions contained within this report. All the actions are positive in terms of allowing greater access to green spaces to residents.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 The Social Value Act and “go local” policy do not apply to this report.

14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 There are no direct human resource implications relevant to this report.

15. APPENDICES

- 15.1 Appendix A – Oughtonhead Common Action Plan
- 15.2 Appendix B – Purwell Meadows Action Plan
- 15.3 Appendix C – Burymead Springs Action Plan
- 15.4 Appendix D – Greenspace Action Plan Production Process including Consultation Flow Chart

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17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 17.1 Management Plans for - Oughtonhead Common
Walsworth Common
Purwell Meadows
Burymead Springs
St John's Cemetery
Cadwell Lane

17.2 Full versions of the above documents are available on the NHDC web site.

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Oughtonhead Common

Action Plan

Annual Management

Action	When	Frequency	Responsibility	Funding	Est. Cost	Status
Path clearance across site	Winter	Annual	FoOHC	NHDC	CMS/Vol time	
Mow Riverside Path	Summer	Biannual	RoW	HCC	£500	
Mow Westmill Lane	Summer	Biannual	RoW	HCC	CMS/Vol time	
Mow paths around grazing area	Summer	Every 6 weeks in summer	Grazier	NHDC		
Trim all other paths across site	Summer	Annual	FoOHC	NHDC	JO'C	
Inspect all path	Summer	Annual	FoOHC	NHDC	CMS/Vol time	
Maintain all paths	Summer	Annual	FoOHC	NHDC	CMS/Vol time	
Litter picking across whole site	All year	Ad hoc	O'Conner's, FoOHC	NHDC	Within JO'C contract	
Litter bin emptying of bins adjacent to site	All year	Weekly	O'Conner's	NHDC	Within JO'C contract/Vol time	
Fly tipping/ abandoned vehicles	As required	As required	NHDC	NHDC	Unknown	
Hedge cutting either side of Westmill Lane	Winter	One side in alternating years	FoOHC	NHDC	CMS/Vol time	
Azolla control in river	Summer	As required	CMS	NHDC	£400	

APPENDIX A

Himalayan Balsam in / adj to river	July	Annual / as required	FoOHC	NHDC	CMS/Vol time	
Ragwort removal in grazing compartments	July	Annual	FoOHC	NHDC	CMS/Vol time	
Thistle control in grazing compartments	July	Annual	FoOHC	NHDC	CMS/Vol time	
Ditch maintenance across site	Winter	As required	FoOHC	NHDC	CMS/Vol time	
River clearance – litter and fallen trees (see guidance on large woody debris)	As required	As required	FoOHC	NHDC	CMS/Vol time	
Habitat protection with wattle hurdles, various locations	Winter	As required	FoOHC	NHDC	CMS/Vol time	
Scrub clearance across grassland	Winter	On going	FoOHC	NHDC	CMS/Vol time	
Guided walks / events	As appropriate	On-going	CMS/ FoOHC	NHDC	CMS/Vol time	
Support of Friends group including training	No constraints	As necessary	CMS/ FoOHC/ NHDC	NHDC	NHDC/CMS/Vol time	
Review annual programme		Annual	CMS/ FoOHC/ NHDC	NHDC	NHDC/CMS/Vol time	

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Proposals 2017 – 2022

Action	When	Frequency	Responsibility	Funding	Est. Cost	Status
Azolla control in river	Summer	As required	CMS	NHDC	£400 each time	
Coppicing south bank of river between the mill and Bedford Road. Select-fell occasional trees to allow more light to the path and river.	Winter	7 year cycle	FoOHC / Contractor	NHDC	CMS/Vol time	
Select-fell occasional trees along river between the mill and Bedford Road, to allow more light to reach river.	Winter	On-off	NHDC / Contractor	NHDC	£3,000	
Open up ditch between sedge bed pool and overflow channel by select felling trees and clearing scrub, to let light in to channel and provide habitat for species such as water vole	Winter	Over 3 years	FoOHC / Contractor	NHDC	£1,000	
Coppicing willow between reed bed and river	Winter	1/5 th a year	FoOHC / Contractor	NHDC	CMS/Vol time	
Flow change measures (deflectors and build-outs) between the mill and Bedford Road	Spring	A section each year	FoOHC	NHDC	CMS/Vol time	
Arrange for inspection by HCC flood team of in-river structures at end of 5-year consent.	July 2019	On-off	CMS / NHDC	NHDC	Nil	
Apply for consent for additional in-channel structures if required, once current 5-year plan complete.	July 2019	On-off	CMS / NHDC	NHDC	£50	
Top-dress entire riverside path and other surfaced paths, repairing hollows as necessary	Summer/Autumn	On-off	NHDC / CMS	NHDC	£15,000	

APPENDIX A

Install culvert under path between ditch and overflow channel to take water away from path. Desilt boundary ditch	Autumn	On-off	NHDC / CMS	NHDC	£2,000	
Plant native hedge along boundary with recreation ground	Winter	On-off	FoOHC	NHDC	£300	
Review and upgrade signage and interpretation across site	No constraints	On-off	NHDC / CMS	NHDC	TBC	
Initiate controlled burning of brash. Remove ash from site	Winter	Annual as required	FoOHC / contractor	NHDC		

PURWELL MEADOWS

FIVE YEAR ACTION PLAN

5.1 ANNUAL ITEMS

Action	Obj no.	When	Responsibility	Funding	Estimated Cost (VAT)	Spec ref.	Status Completed/ Comments
Cut round signs, furniture and entrances	B3, C1	Apr-Oct	NHDC	NHDC GM Budget	GM Contract		
Cut paths	B3, C1	Sep-May	NHDC	NHDC GM Budget	GM Contract		
Continue cattle grazing	E1	Jun-Dec	NHDC	NHDC	Grazing lease with farmer		
Invasive species control – Himalayan Balsam	E2, E3	Jun-Sep	CMS/Vols	NHDC GM Budget			
Remove rubbish and fly tip	C2	When required	NHDC	NHDC GM Budget	As required		
Tree risk management inspections	B1	Every 3 years	NHDC	NHDC Tree Budget	As required		
Health & safety inspections and undertaking of works	B1	When required	NHDC	NHDC Tree Budget	NHDC Tree Budget		
Monitor and maintain site infrastructure as required	A2, C1	When required	NHDC	NHDC GM Budget	As required		
Clean signs	C1	When required	CMS/Vols	NHDC GM Budget	As required		

Action	Obj no.	When	Responsibility	Funding	Estimated Cost (VAT)	Spec ref.	Status Completed/ Comments
Publicise all ongoing management works in advance	G2, G3	Ongoing	NHDC/CMS	NHDC GM Budget	As required		
Promote volunteer and community events at Purwell Meadows	F1, F2, G1, G2, G3	All year	NHDC/CMS	NHDC Budget	As required		
Ensuring ongoing maintenance costs are financially sustainable	D1	Ongoing	NHDC	NHDC Budget			
Securing external funding to ensure the viability of capital works	D2	Ongoing	NHDC/CMS				
Review Action Plans							

Abbreviations: CMS – Countryside Management Service, GM – Grounds Maintenance, NHDC – North Herts District Council, Vols - Volunteers

BURYMEAD SPRINGS

ANNUAL AND REGULAR ACTIONS

Action	Obj. Ref	When	Responsibility	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref	Status
Work with scrap yard to remove any scrap metal which leaves its boundaries	2A	Ongoing	NHDC	Officer time			
Carry out a formal tree safety survey every three years	2B	Ongoing	NHDC	GM budget			
Carry out reactive tree safety works as required	2B	Ongoing	NHDC	GM budget			
Ensure all volunteers and contractors working on the site are aware of the 'no digging' area around the attenuation basin	2C	Ongoing	CMS/NHDC	Officer time			
Continue the established grounds maintenance programme	3A	Ongoing	JoC	GM budget			
Maintain infrastructure as required	3A	Ongoing	NHDC	GM budget			
Remove any graffiti and fly tipping on the site	3B	Ongoing	NHDC	GM budget			
Carry out regular litter picking	3C	Ongoing	JoC	GM budget			
Carry out small scale vegetation management along paths	3C	Ongoing	JoC	GM budget			
Collect rubbish from River Hiz	3C	Sep	CMS/Volunteers	Volunteers			
Carry out an annual conservation cut of the dry meadow	5A	Sep	CMS/Volunteers	Volunteers		5A	
Carry out an annual conservation cut of one third of the wet meadow	5A	Oct	CMS/Volunteers	Volunteers		5A	
Cut around one tenth of the reedbed (300m ²)	5B	Nov	CMS/Volunteers	Volunteers		5B	

Cut viewing channels through the reedbed	5B	Nov	CMS/Volunteers	Volunteers		5B	
Cut reed around the margins of the lagoon	5B	Nov	CMS/Volunteers	Volunteers		5B	
Clear ditch inlets and outlets and short sections of ditch	5B	Nov	CMS/Volunteers	Volunteers		5B	
Remove arisings from meadow and reed cuts	5A/5B	Nov	NHDC	GM budget			
Coppice encroaching scrub within the meadows	5C	Jun	CMS/Volunteers	Volunteers		5C/D	
Coppice encroaching scrub within the reedbed	5C	Dec	CMS/Volunteers	Volunteers		5C/D	
Coppice established scrub/hedgerows in two 50m ² blocks	5D	Feb	CMS/Volunteers	Volunteers		5C/D	
Build links with other organisations with an interest in the Upper and Bedford Ouse catchment	6A	Ongoing	CMS	Officer time			
Organise guided walks linking Burymead Springs with other Purwell Valley sites	7A	Ongoing	CMS/Volunteers	Officer time/ volunteers			

YEAR 1 ACTION PLAN 2018 – 2019

Action	Obj. Ref	When	Responsibility	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref	Status
Install a wooden sign to the viewing platform from the main path	1C	Jun	CMS/NHDC	Capital budget/ volunteers	£200	1C	
Clear encroaching vegetation along the path to the viewing platform	1C	Oct	CMS	Volunteers			
Remove tree limbs around the viewing platform	1C	Oct	CMS	Volunteers			
Implement a grounds maintenance programme to manage the grass paths	3A	Apr	NHDC	GM budget			
Add a short grass path around the west end of the attenuation basin	3A	Apr	NHDC	GM budget			
Submit an external funding application to support capital works	4B	Mar	CMS	Officer time			
Restore part of the wet meadow by cutting and collecting vegetation	5A	Sep	CMS/NHDC	Capital budget	£1500		
Replant any trees or shrubs where new planting failed	5F	Oct	CMS/NHDC	Capital budget/ volunteers			
Control weeds around newly planted trees and shrubs	5F	Jun	CMS	Volunteers			
Remove tree guards from older plantation	5F	Jun	CMS	Volunteers			
Arrange chemical analysis of silt	5G	Jun	CMS/NHDC	GM budget	£350		
Establish and support a Friends Group for NHDC's Purwell Valley sites	6B	Mar	CMS/NHDC	Officer time/ volunteers			
Sign Hicca Way along route past Burymead Springs	7A	Jun	CMS/Arlesey Conservation for Nature	Volunteers			

YEAR 2 ACTION PLAN 2019 – 2020

Action	Obj. Ref	When	Responsibility	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref	Status
Upgrade public footpath signs to signpost Burymead Springs	1A	Jul	CMS/RoW	External	£300	1A	
Use silt from lagoon to define eastern boundary	1B	Oct	CMS/NHDC	External			
Plant a hedgerow along the eastern boundary	1B	Jan	CMS/NHDC	Capital budget/ volunteers	£400	1B	
Design and install an interpretation panel at the viewing platform	1C	Oct	CMS/NHDC	External	£1500	1C	
Establish an unsurfaced path through the wet meadow	1D	Jul	CMS/NHDC	Volunteers			
Coppice and pollard trees along the River Hiz	5E	Oct	CMS/NHDC	External	£5000	5E	
Control weeds around newly planted trees and shrubs	5F	Jun	Volunteers	Volunteers			
Re-excavate the lagoon and parts of the reedbed to restore and increase structural diversity	5G	Oct	CMS/NHDC	External	£20000	5G	
Coppice scrub around seasonal ponds	5H	Oct	CMS/NHDC	External	£1500	5H	
Restore seasonal ponds by desilting	5H	Oct	CMS/NHDC	External	£2500	5H	
Establish voluntary riverfly monitoring along the Purwell and Hiz	6A	Mar	CMS/Volunteers	Officer time/ volunteers			

YEARS 3-5 ACTION PLAN 2020 – 2023

Action	Obj. Ref	When	Responsibility	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref	Status
Control weeds along new hedgerow	1B	Jun 2020	CMS/Volunteers	Volunteers			
Control weeds along new hedgerow	1B	Jun 2021	CMS/Volunteers	Volunteers			
Clear encroaching vegetation along the path to the viewing platform	1C	Oct 2022	CMS/Volunteers	Volunteers			
Remove tree limbs around the viewing platform	1C	Oct 2022	CMS/Volunteers	Volunteers			
Establish viewpoints through the hedgerow	1B	Oct 2022	CMS/Volunteers	Volunteers			
Produce Burymead Springs Greenspace Action Plan, 2023-2028		Mar 2023	CMS	Officer time			
Page 41							

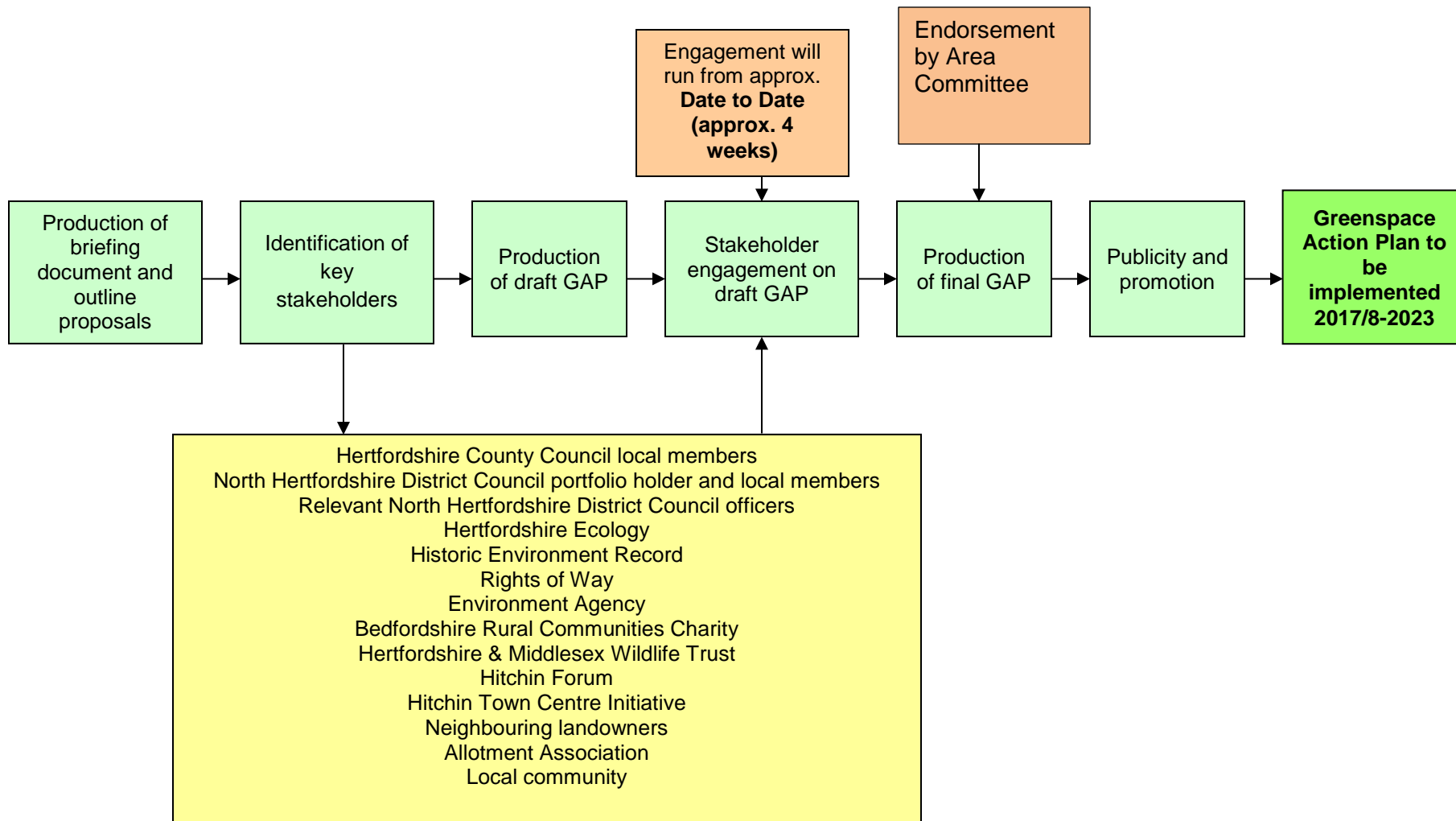
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Consultation Process used to Produce Greenspace Action Plan (Indicative Example)

GREENSPACE ACTION PLAN (GAP) 2018-2023

GAP Production Process

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HITCHIN COMMITTEE 5 DECEMBER 2017
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*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT	AGENDA ITEM No.
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TITLE OF INFORMATION NOTE : GREEN SPACE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

INFORMATION NOTE OF THE HEAD OF LEISURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR LEISURE

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This information note details the steps taken and the progress made in identifying interested groups and organisations to safely provide play area facilities previously provided by the Council.

2. STEPS TO DATE

2.1 CABINET

At the 24 January 2017 Cabinet meeting the following was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the results of the consultation, as identified in the body of the report, be noted, and that it be further noted that Cabinet was satisfied that demographics and size of the focus groups were appropriate for the type of consultation, and that the views of young people and children who were the main users of these facilities had been included in the consultation results;
- (2) That the draft new Green Space Management Strategy (GSMS) 2017 – 2021, as attached at Appendix A to the report, be formally adopted;
- (3) That it be noted that, prior to removing facilities identified in the Strategy, the Council shall allow up to 1 March 2018 for interested parties to put forward sustainable proposals that would fund both the capital and revenue requirements to safely continue to provide such facilities, and that a proactive approach be adopted in seeking community groups to take on facilities, including advertising that support would be offered to guide groups through the process, particularly through use of social media;
- (4) That the work programme in the new Green Space Management Strategy be incorporated into the 2017/18 budget setting process; and
- (5) That, so far as Cabinet's authority is required in respect of any variation to the contract with the Grounds Maintenance contractor, to give effect to any future revenue saving options identified within the GSMS, such authority be delegated to the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services, in consultation with the Executive Member for Waste, Recycling and Environment.

REASON FOR DECISION: To best enable the retention of the green space within the budgets available to the Council.

2.2 OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

On the 15 February 2017 Overview & Scrutiny received a call-in of the decisions made by Cabinet on 24 January 2017 – Review of Green Space Management Strategy and it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the decisions made by Cabinet on 24 January 2017 regarding the Review of the Green Space Management Strategy not be referred back to Cabinet;
- (2) That the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services be requested to produce a report detailing the steps taken and the progress made in identifying interested groups and organisations to safely provide facilities and present it to this Committee at the meeting due to be held on 18 July 2017;
- (3) That the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services be requested to produce a report detailing the steps taken and the progress made in identifying interested groups and organisations to safely provide facilities, together with details of play areas that have not attracted any interested groups and would likely close following the deadline of 1 March 2018 and present it to this Committee at the meeting due to be held in March 2018.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider the Call - In of decisions made by Cabinet on 24 January 2017 regarding the Review of the Green Space Management Strategy.

2.3 LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN.

In addition to the Overview & Scrutiny call in, a formal complaint was made to the Local Government Ombudsman. The Ombudsman found no fault with the Council and endorsed our method of consultation with the use of focus groups.

2.4 ACTIONS TAKEN AND PROGRESS

A communication plan has been produced and is shown at appendix A. It lists agreed actions between Jan 2017– April 2018.

As per the agreed actions in the Councils adopted Green Space Management Strategy 2017-2021 pavilions identified as being beyond economic repair have now been closed. (Bakers Close, Baldock, St. Johns Road, Cadwell Lane and Walsworth Common, Hitchin.) Prior to removing pavilions there is a period of time until 1st March 2018 for interested parties to put forward sustainable proposals.

Also as per the agreed actions in the Councils adopted Green Space Management Strategy 2017-2021, Local neighbourhood play areas identified as lower usage shall have until 1st March 2018 for interested parties to put forward sustainable proposals. (13 sites)

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS TAKEN

2.4.1 Pavilions

Date	Action
Feb 2017	All current users of football pavilions contacted seeking expressions of interest for asset transfer. Appendix B details letter sent to existing users.
Feb 2017	Received expression of interested from interested party for use of Bakers Close pavilion as venue for beer festival. (later withdrawn)
Feb 2017	Contacted Hertfordshire Football Association for interest in asset transfer of pavilions
Feb 2017	Met with Hitchin Sunday Football League. Provided detailed information on maintenance and repairs required to pavilions.
Feb 2017	Expression of interest received from Hitchin Town Youth FC. Provided detailed information on maintenance and repairs required to pavilions.
Feb 2017	Received outline business case from community group for use of Bakers Close pavilion. Detailed business case to follow later in year.
April 2017	Followed up Sunday Football League for proposals for pavilions.
April 2017	Followed up Hitchin Town Youth for proposals for pavilions (No response)
April 2017	Complaint received from Sunday Football League re closure of pavilions.
May 2017	Received expression of interest from St. Johns FC to take on St. Johns pavilion. Provided detailed information on maintenance and repairs required to pavilion. Various meetings took place between May – August.
June 2017	Received expression of interest from Albion FC to take on Cadwell pavilion. Provided detailed information on maintenance and repairs required to pavilion. (Later withdrawn).
Aug 2017	Private company expressed interest in Bakers Close pavilion as fitness centre. Currently developing business case.
July 2017	Emailed community group for update on proposals for Bakers Close pavilion.
Sept 2017	Local Government Ombudsman response to a complaint found no fault with Council and endorsed use of focus groups.
Oct 2017	Emailed St. John's FC for update on business case.

2.4.2 Play Areas

Date	Action
Jan 2017	Article in Mercury paper requesting asset transfer of play areas.
Feb 2017	Contacted 38 residents who expressed an interest in play areas for expressions of interest for asset transfer.
Feb 2017	Contacted 46 PTA's and 85 community groups seeking expressions of interest for asset transfer.
Feb 2017	Play area information sheet on Web site (see appendix C)
Feb 2017	Contacted Royston Town Council and North Herts Homes seeking interest in asset transfer.
Feb 2017	Met with Gt. Ashby Council re options for play area. (They are undertaking residents survey results due in July)
Feb 2017	Tweeted offer of support for community groups.
Feb 2017	Provided Royston Councillors maintenance cost of play areas.
Mar 2017	Article in Comet paper requesting community groups to run play areas.
Mar 2017	Article in Royston Crow paper requesting community groups to run play areas.
Mar 2017	Article in Comet online requesting community support for Rosehill play area.
Mar 2017	Contacted Town Centre managers for funding for play areas.

Mar 2017	New sponsorship page on web site (see appendix D) Emailed link to Town Centre Managers & NHDC Business development officer to include in business newsletter.
Mar 2017	Met with planning to discuss future options for new play areas.
Apr 2017	Community management signs erected in 13 play area (see appendix E)
Apr 2017	Royston Town Council resolved not to fund play areas.
May 2017	Met with Community group who expressed interest in taking on Jackmans Recreation Ground play area.
May 2017	Petition received to save Rosehill play area.
June 2017	Community Development working on a business plan with Community group who expressed interest in taking on Jackmans Recreation Ground play area.
Sept 2017	Gt. Ashby Community Council expressed interest in taking on 3 play areas and funding new equipment for those listed as minimal investment.
Oct 2017	Contacted Hitchin Members with proposal for Rosehill play area.
Oct 2017	Mr Hall confirmed he was in the process of setting up community group to take on responsibility for Jackmans play area.

3. INFORMATION TO NOTE

3.1 SUMMARY OF PROGRESS MADE

Colour	Status
	No interest from third parties
	Expressions of interest received
	Interested group secured

3.1.1 Pavilions

Site	Progress
Bakers Close Pavilion, Baldock	Outline business case received from community group to develop as social club with retained changing rooms and additional community use. Awaiting final business case.
St. Johns changing rooms, Hitchin	Expression of interest received from St. Johns FC to take on building. Provided detailed maintenance cost and condition survey. Community Development working with St. Johns FC on business case.
Cadwell Lane changing rooms, Hitchin	Expression of interest received from Albion FC to take on building. Later withdrawn.
Walsworth changing rooms, Hitchin	No expressions of interest received for existing building. Aiming to secure section 106 money for new build in 2020/21.

3.1.2 Play Areas

Site	Progress
Generic	Seeking sponsorship of some of our larger play area sites, which may generate additional income to offset the cost to help retain some of the smaller sites. We are also seeking opportunities for alternative play provision in the locality of our existing play areas through negotiations with landowners and stakeholders.
Betjeman Road, Royston	No interest from Royston Town Council. Royston District Councillors seeking options for alternative funding.
Farrier Court, Royston	No interest from Royston Town Council.
Ivel Road, Baldock	No expressions of interest received.
Dacre Road, Hitchin	No expressions of interest received.
Rosehill, Hitchin	Lots of community support to retain play area. Officers have potentially found a long term sustainable solution to retain a children's play area for the residents of Rosehill. Officers will be recommending to Cabinet in March 2018 that the existing play facility remains until such a time as a new play area is provided in the locality by an independent provider which it is expected would be at nil cost to the Council.
Symonds Rd, Hitchin	No expressions of interest received.
Jackmans Recreation Ground, Letchworth	Expression of interest received from community group to fund play area. Community Development working with group to formalise status.
Linnet Close, Letchworth	Some community support to retain play area. No offers of funding.
Oaktree Close, Letchworth	No expressions of interest received.
Chilterns, Gt. Ashby	Gt. Ashby Community Council have agreed to take on responsibility of play area.
Cleveland Way, Gt. Ashby	Gt. Ashby Community Council have agreed to take on responsibility of play area.
Fairfield Crescent, Gt. Ashby	Play area reclassified as not having formal play equipment.
Merrick Close, Gt. Ashby	Gt. Ashby Community Council have agreed to take on responsibility of play area..

4. NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 In March 2018 provide a progress report to Overview & Scrutiny and report to Cabinet on any completed or proposed asset transfers.

5. APPENDICES

- Appendix A: Communication Plan
- Appendix B: Letter sent to existing pavilion users
- Appendix C: Play Area information sheet
- Appendix D: Parks Sponsorship page

6. CONTACT OFFICERS

Steve Geach
Parks & Countryside Development Manager
Ext 4553
Email: steve.geach@north-herts.gov.uk

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Green Space Management Strategy 2017-2021

**COMMUNICATION PLAN
OUTLINE TIMELINE FOR COMMUNICATIONS – GSMS**

Timing	Action	Who is responsible?	Complete
Jan 2017	Article in local press seeking interested parties for asset transfer	Comms	Yes
Feb	Contact residents who expressed an interest in play areas	SG	Yes
Feb	Contact local football clubs advising of closure of pavilions and seeking interest in asset transfer	SG	Yes
Feb	Contact Herts FA seeking interest in asset transfer	SG	Yes
Monthly	Inform Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee	SG	ongoing
Feb	Meet with Gt. Ashby Community Council re asset transfer of play areas	SG	Yes
Feb	Meet with Sunday Football League seeking interest in asset transfer	SG	Yes
Feb	Contact PTA's of all Schools in District seeking interest in asset transfer	SG	Yes
Feb	Produce information pack/toolkit for asset transfer of play areas	SG	Yes
Feb	Publish information pack/toolkit on a web page on NHDC website	SG	Yes
Feb	Contact community groups who may have an interest in asset transfer	SG	Yes
Feb	Press release	Comms	Yes
Feb	Social media	Comms	Yes

March/April	Erect notices in play areas seeking interest in asset transfer	SG	Yes
April	Contact local companies for sponsorship of play areas	SG	Yes
June	Article in Summer Outlook seeking interest in asset transfer	Comms	Yes
June/July	Social media	Comms	Yes
July	Progress report to Overview & Scrutiny	SG	Yes
Oct/Nov	Press release – last chance	Comms	Yes
Oct/Nov	Social media – last chance	Comms	Yes
Oct/Nov	Briefing note for Area Committees	SG	Yes
March 2018	Progress report to Overview & Scrutiny	SG	
March	Report to Cabinet on any completed or proposed asset transfers	SG	
April	Erect removal of equipment notices at play areas not transferred explaining what will happen to the site	SG	
April/May	Remove equipment and landscape sites not transferred	SG	
March/April	Article in Spring Outlook promoting importance of green space	Comms	

Letter sent to existing pavilion users

Dear

On the 24th January 2017 the Council's Cabinet discussed the future of green space and adopted a four year Green Space Management Strategy to ensure its protection in North Herts. The following link provides details of the Cabinet report listed at item 9. Appendix A. details the adopted 2017-2021 Green Space Strategy.

<http://web.north-herts.gov.uk/aksnherts/users/public/admin/kab14.pl?operation=SUBMIT&meet=102&cmte=CA B&gpid=public&arc=71>

You will see that the stated aim of the strategy is 'to provide a sustainable, strategic approach for the future management of green space'. The key driver of the strategy is to retain and maintain the green space in our urban environments for current and future generations to enjoy.

In relation to Football Pavilions:

The Council recognises that many of its pavilions are beyond economic repair and costly to maintain. It has been agreed that at the end of the current football season, the following pavilions shall be closed: St. Johns Road, Cadwell Lane and Walsworth Common, Hitchin.

The Council will allow up to 1 March 2018 for interested parties to put forward viable proposals for the transfer of these facilities to a third party.

If you feel you may have a viable proposal please contact North Hertfordshire District Council on 01462474553 or email steve.geach@north-herts.gov.uk.

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Play Area information sheet

Managing a play area

In order to ensure continued investment in its major play areas, the Council is looking for interested parties to put forward viable proposals that would fund both the maintenance and as required the replacement of the equipment for some small play areas.

These play areas include:

Dacre Road, Rosehill and Symons Rd play areas in Hitchin;

Jackmans Recreation Ground, Linnet Close and Oaktree Close play areas in Letchworth;

Ivel Road play area in Baldock;

Betjeman Road & Farriar Court play areas in Royston; and

Chilterns, Cleveland Way, Fairfield Crescent and Merrick Close play areas in Gt. Ashby

Firstly, if not already established you will need to form a legally recognised body such as a registered Friends of Group or Residents Association. Our Community Development team will be happy to assist you in this. Please contact our Community Manager, Stuart Izzard on 01462 474854 or email stuart.izzard@north-herts.gov.uk.

What we will do

The Council will transfer the play area to the group in the form of a 25 year lease. The lease will be legally binding and it is recommended that you obtain your own legal advice to ensure you are happy with it. The lease will stipulate what the Council expects from you and what you can expect from the Council.

The Council will continue to maintain the grass and any trees or shrubs that may be present along with litter picking the area and emptying the bins.

What you will do

In summary you will become responsible for the regular inspection and maintenance of the play area including the equipment, safety surfacing, litter bins, seat, fencing etc. You will also be responsible for the replacement of equipment as and when required.

You will need to take out your own public liability insurance. This [charity insurance page](#) provides useful information on insurance and other information of interest to community groups.

Inspections and risk assessments

The play area must remain open for general public use and the Council expects you to maintain it in a safe and clean condition for use.

Currently the Council inspects its play areas on a daily basis and you may wish to contact our grounds maintenance contractor for a quote to do this on your behalf. Our contractor can be contacted via andrew.mills@north-herts.gov.uk. We have found that these recorded daily inspections pay dividends in defending insurance claims. If you wish to do the inspections yourself The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) can arrange suitable training. RoSPA can be contacted at enquiries@rospa.com.

Each year you will be required to undertake an independent risk assessment of the play area and send a copy to the Council. The Council will expect you to undertake any remedial work highlighted in the report. If any highlighted work identified as a risk to users is not undertaken, the Council may have no option but to remove the item of equipment; if there are regular failures, the Council will need to consider whether to terminate the lease.

The Council has negotiated a reduced rate with a specialist playground inspection company for these annual inspections and you may wish to take advantage of this service. The current charge is £50.00. If you prefer to make your own arrangements RoSAP will be able to provide a suitable list of companies.

Considerations when taking on a play area

The check list below is not exhaustive but identifies some of things that you will need to consider prior to taking on a play area:

Becoming qualified to undertake play area inspections.	Retaining records of safety inspections.
Routine maintenance of the equipment such as replacement swing seats and chains.	Arranging public liability insurance.
How to respond to public / media enquiries	Training for routine maintenance for example how to safely replace a swing seat.
Who will paint the equipment	Arranging annual risk assessment
What to do if you find hazardous waste such as needles from drug users.	What contact number to have displayed at the play area in case of emergencies or complaints.
How to quickly make safe a dangerous item of play equipment.	How to clean noxious substances from play equipment e.g. dog mess, sick etc.

Further help and information

This may all sound rather daunting but it is important to realise upfront what is involved in managing a play area. This information may help prevent future unexpected surprises.

If you google ‘Community Playgrounds’ you will see that a number of Councils have adopted a similar approach. You will also be able to contact a number of community groups that already manage play areas.

There are also a number of playground companies that will be able to offer help and guidance especial on funding opportunities for community playgrounds. Below is a brochure from Wicksteed Playgrounds that you may find of use.

If you wish to proceed with taking on the responsibility of your local play area, please contact Steve Geach, Parks & Countryside Development Manager, steve.geach@north-herts.gov.uk, or call 01462 474553.

Attachment	Size
Wicksteed Playgrounds Funding Brochure	1.02 MB

Parks Sponsorship page

Park Sponsorship Scheme

The Parks service of North Hertfordshire District Council runs a sponsorship scheme, designed to offer local businesses the opportunity to advertise in popular destinations around the district.

Roadside bedding displays, play areas, water splash parks and skate/BMX parks in North Hertfordshire are available to sponsor with all proceeds being used to improve the surrounding park areas. You can see an example of a sign [below](#).

Some of the sites on offer include main town gateway locations such as those entering Letchworth Garden City and large floral beds in the Green Flag award winning Priory Memorial Gardens in Royston. Also available to sponsor are the extremely popular and recently improved and well used larger play areas in our towns. Four popular interactive water splash parks including the large water pool at Howard Park in Letchworth are also available to sponsor along with our newly constructed skate park at Norton Common in Letchworth.

For more information please contact the Parks Department on 01462 474000 or by email via services@north.herts.gov.uk to learn more about the scheme and discuss how it could help your business.

Sites available for sponsorship

Site	Size (M2)	Description
Letchworth Garden City		The World's first Garden City
Pixmore Way roundabout flower beds	177m ²	Flora display at main gateway into town centre
Howard Park play area	1950m ²	Play area located adjacent large interactive water splash park attracting many thousands of visitors each year.
Norton Common, skate park	1205m ²	New district wide skate boarding facility.
Baldock		Historic market town
Avenue Park water splash park	390m ²	Interactive water splash park, open May–September each year.
Royston		Historic market town
Priory Memorial gardens, flora displays.	617m ²	Town centre gardens. Displays include herbaceous borders and annual bedding.
Priory Memorial gardens, water splash park	300m ²	Interactive water splash park, open May –September each year.

Hitchin		Historic market town
Bancroft Recreation Ground, water splash park	300m ²	Interactive water splash park, open May –September each year.
Ransoms Recreation Ground, play area	798m ²	Recently refurbished play area including equipment for all ages and multi use games area
Walsworth Common, Play Area	1914m ²	Recently refurbished play area including equipment for all ages and ball games area

Attachment**Size**

[Sponsorship sign example](#)

244.21 KB