

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES

Meeting of the Council held in the Spirella Ballroom, Icknield Way,
Letchworth Garden City
on Wednesday, 19th July, 2017 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillors John Bishop (Vice-Chairman in the Chair), Ian Albert, David Barnard, Clare Billing, Judi Billing, John Booth, Paul Clark, Julian Cunningham, Bill Davidson, Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, Sarah Dingley, Jane Gray, Jean Green, Gary Grindal, Simon Harwood, Steve Hemingway, Cathryn Henry, Terry Hone, Tony Hunter, Steve Jarvis, David Levett, Bernard Lovewell, Ian Mantle, Paul Marment, Jim McNally, Gerald Morris, Michael Muir, Lynda Needham, Frank Radcliffe, Mike Rice, Deepak Sangha, Ray Shakespeare-Smith, Adrian Smith, Harry Spencer-Smith, Martin Stears-Handscomb, Claire Strong, Richard Thake, Terry Tyler and Michael Weeks

IN ATTENDANCE: David Scholes (Chief Executive), Norma Atlay (Strategic Director of Finance, Policy and Governance), Ian Couper (Service Director - Resources), Anthony Roche (Deputy Chief Executive) and Ian Gourlay (Committee and Member Services Manager).

ALSO PRESENT:
3 members of the public..

18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Alan Millard (Chairman), Faye S. Frost, Fiona Hill, Lorna Kercher and Janine Paterson.

19 MINUTES

It was moved by Councillor Mrs L.A. Needham, seconded by Councillor Julian Cunningham, and

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Council held on 18 May 2017 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

20 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

No additional business was presented for consideration by the Council.

21 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(1) Norma Atlay – Retirement

The Chairman invited the Leader of the Council (Councillor Mr L.A. Needham) and former Deputy Leader of the Council (Councillor T.W. Hone) to pay tribute to Norma Atlay (Strategic Director of Finance, Policy and Governance) on her impending retirement.

Councillor Needham stated that she had never had a portfolio at NHDC which had meant she had cause to work in close association with Norma. However, since she had become Leader of the Council she had got to know Norma very well.

Councillor Needham advised that Norma was thought of extremely highly at a national level in CIPFA and in Government circles, and her advice had been sought on many occasions.

Councillor Needham thanked Norma for all the years she had worked for the Council, and her insight and ability to converse with individuals at all levels would be sorely missed.

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On a personal level, Councillor Needham found Norma to be very approachable. She was always willing to answer questions and queries in a straightforward and patient manner. Councillor Needham thanked Norma for this skill, which had made her role as Leader of the Council much easier.

Councillor Hone advised that he had worked alongside Norma as Cabinet Member for Finance and IT for the past 15 years, which he had enjoyed very much, including their annual trips to the CIPFA Conference. He had enjoyed Norma's company at these conferences, which were also very useful for networking with representatives of other councils.

Councillor Hone considered Norma to be thoroughly professional, always providing sound counsel to him and many other Members.

Councillor Hone explained that Norma was retiring to spend time with her husband, who was also about to retire. He wished them both well in their retirement together, including the extensive travelling that they were shortly to embark on. He thanked Norma once again for all she had done for the Council over the past 30 years.

Throughout the meeting, a number of other Members added their thanks to Norma and wished her well for her retirement.

(2) Long Service Awards

(i) Charmaine Cooper

The Chairman announced that Charmaine Cooper was a valued staff member of North Hertfordshire District Council and on 27 April 2017 reached 25 years of service. During her career, Charmaine had been an integral member of the Council's front line Benefits Service by administering all aspects of housing benefit debt and ensuring the recovery of public funds with the utmost duty.

At NHDC, encouragement was given to all employees to deliver the very best service in line with the Council's core objectives and special recognition needed to be given to Charmaine for her continued contributions to always providing the best service possible under challenging economic circumstances.

(ii) Kaeren Shepherd

The Chairman advised that Kaeren Shepherd began her career with Careline in July 1992, having previously worked within the banking industry for the Trustee Savings Bank. Kaeren started as a Careline operator working from the original site at Peter Sell House.

Kaeren had a particular skill with regard to administrative organisation and this had been particularly relevant to Careline. Kaeren's current role was as the data administrator and she kept Careline's vast data flows in order, so that operators had the right information to handle the life critical calls that were presented at over 100 calls per hour. She was well respected and liked both by her colleagues and customers who often mentioned the relief they felt knowing that, whatever their issue, it would be proficiently handled by Kaeren.

Kaeren was looking forward to Careline's further development and the Team that they were in safe hands with Kaeren at the data tiller.

It was moved by the Chairman, seconded by Councillor Mrs L.A. Needham, and

RESOLVED: That the Council places on record its sincere thanks to Charmaine Cooper and Kaeren Shepherd for their long and valuable service to local government in North Hertfordshire.

(3) Declarations of Interest

The Chairman 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.

22 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Committee was addressed by Mr Brian Foreman (Hitchin resident) in respect of the Churchgate Shopping Centre, Hitchin.

Mr Foreman advised that he was speaking as the Voluntary Advisor to the Churchgate Association of Retailers, who had businesses in the Churchgate Shopping Centre in Hitchin.

Mr Foreman commented that the retailers were pleased to hear of the support he received at the Hitchin Committee meeting on 27 June 2017 when he spoke at the Town Talk. The problem was that a senior Council officer had decided that NHDC was not willing to do anything about the sad and sorry state of the Shopping Centre. He advised that he had appealed this decision.

Mr Foreman stated that, for the many visitors using Hitchin's car parks and arriving by bus, this was their first sighting of the town's shops, with their dirty fascias and rusting metal bars, filthy electrical lights, under decaying overhead canopies giving rise to health and safety issues. Viewed from the Biggin Lane Car Park, the rear of the Shopping Centre was equally disgusting.

Mr Foreman considered that leaving the Centre as it was in the affluent south-east did not inspire city workers to come and live in Hitchin. NHDC had been reluctant over the years to enforce the terms of the 1973 lease agreement since, if the landlord did not maintain the Centre, the Council could carry out the work and charge the landlord with the bill. He felt that there should be two coats of quality paint at regular intervals applied to the outside of the Centre.

Mr Foreman explained that Hammersmatch had received service charges from its tenants for the 30 units for the past 17 years. One larger unit had reported being charged £560 per month and had obtained very little in return. It seemed to him that getting Brown and Lee, the managing agents, to get the work done and up to a good standard was difficult. On their website in advertising No. 11 for rent they state

"There is a service charge to cover the general maintenance of the service yard, canopies and services". He wondered just how much had actually been spent.

Mr Foreman stated that, at long last Hammersmatch, who in one of their planning applications had proposed spending up to £8million on refurbishment, had said that they would carry out refurbishment works at Whitsun 2017. This did not happen, but it seemed that works were just starting now. They had carried out a repair at Lifestyle, the Antique Centre, where water penetration had ruined stock, had erected safety barriers, and were still working on the Centre moving onto other premises. However, will this be enough?

Mr Foreman advised that NHDC had been taking 40% of the rents and pocketing the highest car parking charges in North Hertfordshire from the nearby car parks. He felt that the Council could afford to put something back into the Shopping Centre by arranging for a surveyor to decide how much work was needed, both externally and internally, and to carry out the 14 year review in the lease, with the last one due in 2010. In some shops there were damp and electrical issues inside, giving rise to health and safety concerns with old and broken fittings as reported by tenants. There were two dangerous entrance steps. He considered that questions remain to be answered.

Mr Foreman asked if NHDC had been negligent in not carrying out the terms of the lease agreement? With 81 years left on the lease, should a Council officer, however senior, had taken such a negative decision without consultation with local councillors? He felt that something had to be done. The Churchgate retailers and the Council Tax payers of North Hertfordshire deserved some answers.

The Chairman thanked Mr Foreman for his presentation.

23 ITEM REFERRED FROM FINANCE, AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE: 12 JUNE 2017 - FINANCE, AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17

The former Chairman of the Finance, Audit & Risk Committee (Councillor Michael Weeks) presented a referral from the meeting of that Committee held on 12 June 2017, in respect of Annual Report of the Committee for 2016/17 (Minute 13 refers).

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The former Chairman of the Finance, Audit & Risk Committee thanked the Members of the 2016/17 Committee and officers for their support throughout the year.

It was moved by Councillor Michael Weeks, seconded by Councillor Simon Harwood, and

RESOLVED: That the Annual Report of the Finance, Audit & Risk Committee 2016/17 be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To comply with the requirements of the Council's Constitution.

24 ITEM REFERRED FROM CABINET: 13 JUNE 2017 - RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE AND ANNUAL REPORT ON RISK MANAGEMENT 2016/17

The Council considered the Minute of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 13 June 2017, in respect of the Risk Management Update and Annual Report on Risk Management 2016/17 (Minute 6 refers). A copy of the report considered by the Cabinet was included with the agenda, as were the following appendices:

Appendix A – Corporate Risks with changed assessments; and
Appendix B – Annual Report on Risk Management 2016/17.

It was moved by Councillor Julian Cunningham, seconded by Councillor Mrs L.A. Needham and, following debate and upon being put to the vote, it was

RESOLVED: That the Annual Report on Risk and Opportunities Management 2016/17, as set out at Appendix B to the report, be approved.

REASON FOR DECISION: To comply with the requirements of the Risk and Opportunities Management Strategy.

25 ITEM REFERRED FROM CABINET: 13 JUNE 2017 - REVENUE BUDGET OUTTURN 2016/17

The Council considered the Minute of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 13 June 2017, in respect of the Revenue Budget Outturn 2016/17 (Minute 8 refers). A copy of the report considered by the Cabinet was included with the agenda, as were the following appendices:

Appendix A – General Fund Summary 2016/17; and;
Appendix B – Carry Forward Budgets requested for 2017/18.

It was moved by Councillor Julian Cunningham, seconded by Councillor Mrs L.A. Needham and, following debate and upon being put to the vote, it was

RESOLVED: That the net transfer to earmarked reserves of £4,000 identified in Table 6 and Paragraph 8.24 of the report, be approved.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure that changes to the Council's balances are monitored and approved.

26 ITEM REFERRED FROM CABINET: 13 JUNE 2017 - ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW 2016/17

The Council considered the Minute of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 13 June 2017, in respect of the Annual Treasury Management Review 2016/17 (Minute 9 refers). A copy of the report considered by the Cabinet was included with the agenda, as was the following appendix:

Appendix A – Annual Treasury Management Review 2016/17.

It was moved by Councillor Julian Cunningham, seconded by Councillor Mrs L.A. Needham and, upon being put to the vote, it was

RESOLVED:

(1) That the actual 2016/17 prudential and treasury indicators be approved; and

(2) That the Annual Treasury Report for 2016/17, as attached at Appendix A to the report, be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure the Council's continued compliance with CIPFA's code of practice on Treasury Management and the Local Government Act 2003 and that the Council manages its exposure to interest and capital risk.

27 **ITEM REFERRED FROM CABINET: 13 JUNE 2017 - CORPORATE OBJECTIVES FOR 2018-2023**

The Council considered the Minute of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 13 June 2017, in respect of Corporate Objectives for 2018-2023 (Minute 11 refers). A copy of the report considered by the Cabinet was included with the agenda.

It was moved by Councillor Ray Shakespeare-Smith, seconded by Councillor Mrs L.A. Needham and, following debate and upon being put to the vote, it was

RESOLVED: That the following Corporate Objectives be continued for 2018 to 2023:

1. To work with our partners to provide an attractive and safe environment for our residents, where diversity is welcomed and the disadvantaged are supported;
2. To promote sustainable growth within our district to ensure economic and social opportunities exist for our communities, whilst remaining mindful of our cultural and physical heritage; and
3. To ensure that the Council delivers cost effective and necessary services to our residents that are responsive to developing need and financial constraints.

REASON FOR DECISION: To allow the Council to review the Corporate Objectives which will guide the Corporate Business Planning process for 2018/19 through to 2023.

28 **CONFERRING POWERS TO THE PARISH MEETING OF CLOTHALL**

The Chief Executive submitted a report seeking approval to convey powers to the Parish Meeting of Clothall, including the village of Luffenhall, to enable it to provide grants, following a request received from the Parish. The following appendix was submitted with the report:

Appendix A – The decision and report of the Parish.

The Chief Executive clarified that, notwithstanding various mentions of the Parish meeting of Clothall in the report, the correct name should be the Parish meeting of Clothall with Luffenhall.

RESOLVED: That the power to make discretionary grants be conveyed to the Parish Meeting of Clothall with Luffenhall.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure that community initiatives within the Parish are maintained and enhanced to help secure community cohesion and development.

29 **SENIOR MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS**

The Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) submitted a report in respect of the proposed senior management arrangements for the Council from 2017 onwards. The following appendices were submitted with the report:

Appendix 1 – Current management arrangements; and
Appendix 2 – Proposed Senior Management Structure.

The Head of Paid Service advised that Recommendation 2.1 of the report referred to the proposed revised Senior Management arrangements for the Council;

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Recommendation 2.2 related to the proposed appointment of Mr Ian Couper to the statutory post of Chief Financial Officer (Section 151 Officer) following the retirement of the Strategic Director of Finance, Policy and Governance; and Recommendation 2.3 re-affirmed the Council's commitment to its Reorganisation Policy in respect of the re-structuring process.

The Head of Paid Service drew attention to the Council's budgetary situation and the fact that, for 2017/18, the Council had identified and approved efficiency savings for the Senior Management Restructuring. The proposals contained in the report would allow those savings to be achieved.

The Head of Paid Service stated that the main changes proposed were for the posts of Strategic Director to be deleted, and in their place a new post of Deputy Chief Executive to work alongside himself in the strategic management of the Authority.

Allied to this was the proposal to replace the Heads of Service/Corporate Managers posts with 7 posts of Service Directors.

The Head of Paid Service commented that the final grouping of services in each of the Service Directorates was yet to be finalised, and that this would not happen until after the appointment of the Deputy Chief Executive, and following consultation with the existing Heads of Service and Corporate Managers. However, he felt that it would be helpful to provide an indication of the likely priorities for service areas to commence that consultation. It was therefore proposed that, for the purposes of updating Council and providing an initial basis for informal consultation with Heads of Service and Corporate Managers, the main areas of focus were likely to be:

- Resources;
- Legal and Community;
- Leisure & Environment - delivering the new waste service;
- Revenues, Benefits and IT;
- Commercialisation and Customer Services; and
- Planning and Public Health.

In terms of timelines, the Head of Paid Service advised that he was in dialogue with the East of England Local Government Association regarding recruitment to the Deputy Chief Executive post, and that he would be working with them to move that process forward in late July/August 2017.

It was moved by Councillor Mrs L.A. Needham, and seconded by Councillor Julian Cunningham, that the recommendations in the report be approved.

The Council debated the report and the Leader of the Council and Head of Paid Service answered a number of Members' questions on the report. Some Members questioned the recruitment process and the proposed titles of "Service Directors" in terms of how this might be perceived by the public and potential re-grading leading to a loss of savings.

The Chief Executive advised of the process, and confirmed that any pay scales for the new posts would be independently evaluated by Hay. He stated that he would keep Members fully informed of progress on the restructuring process.

Upon the motion being put to the vote, it was

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the proposed senior management arrangements, as set out in the report, and the proposed timetable for the implementation of these arrangements, be noted;
- (2) That, to meet its statutory responsibilities, Ian Couper, Head of Finance, Performance and Asset Management be appointed as the Council's Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer), effective from 4 September 2017; and
- (3) That the approach taken over many years of seeking to avoid compulsory redundancies wherever possible, as advocated in the agreed Reorganisation Policy, be supported. In the event that redundancies (either voluntary or compulsory) are required, then the costs of such redundancies will be met from a reduction in the General Fund balance which will be reported through the quarterly budget monitoring process.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Council to meet the significant financial and service delivery challenges which it faces over the next 3-5 years.

30 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

(A) Planning Applications

In accordance with Standing Order 4.8.11(b), the following question had been submitted by Councillor Steve Jarvis to Councillor David Levett (Cabinet Member for Planning and Enterprise):

“Why have the Council’s officers been asking developers to submit planning applications for sites identified in the Local Plan in advance of the Examination in Public of the Plan?”

Councillor Levett replied that the question assumed that that Planning Officers had been approaching developers to submit planning applications as described. As Planning Officers had not been approaching developers in this way he would be unable to give the reasons why.

Councillor Jarvis commented that he had been advised by a developer that he had been asked by NHDC to submit a planning application in advance of the Local Plan Examination in Public. He wondered why a developer would state this if it were not true. In realising that Councillor Levett would be unable to answer this, as a supplementary question, Councillor Jarvis asked if Councillor Levett would like to speculate on an answer?

Councillor Levett replied that he had spoken to Planning Officers and had received assurances that no such advice had been provided to developers. If Councillor Jarvis had any evidence that it had occurred, then he asked that it be given to him.

(B) Transport, Parking Enforcement and Safety

In accordance with Standing Order 4.8.11(b), the following question had been submitted by Councillor Judi Billing to Councillor Ray Shakespeare-Smith (Cabinet Member for Policy, Transport and Green Issues):

“Could the Portfolio Holder for Policy, Transport and Green Issues outline what arrangements are being put in place to ensure that we have the capacity to fulfil our responsibilities for transport, parking enforcement and safety including liaising properly with the County Council on such issues for the benefit of the people of North Herts?”

In terms of parking, Councillor Shakespeare-Smith replied that NHDC had adopted Decriminalised Parking Enforcement powers in January 2005. In respect of on-street parking enforcement, the Council acted on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council (the highway authority) under the terms of an agency agreement between the two authorities. As the parking authority, NHDC was also responsible for the management and enforcement of its own off-street car parks.

The Council had an adopted parking strategy which was under review at present.

The Strategy sets out the Council’s policy for the management and implementation of parking where required across the District. The Council had a programme of town wide parking reviews for each of its towns. As part of the reviews, the Council would seek to address some, but not all, on street parking issues. These were mainly in relation to parking issues in close proximity to the town centres and railway stations.

The County Council was responsible for highway safety matters and in some instances would also implement on street parking restrictions as part of county councillor highway locality budgets. This split function could be confusing and officers were seeking to improve working and responding to queries with the County Council going forward. Officers from both authorities meet quarterly to discuss new and on-going schemes emerging from the urban transport plans.

In terms of enforcement, NHDC had 10 Civil Enforcement Officers, a Parking Team Leader and Parking Manager, who actively managed parking enforcement across the District in accordance with the Parking Strategy. He was confident that the current level of staffing was sufficient for the levels of enforcement.

In terms of Strategic Transport matters, Councillor Shakespeare-Smith stated that this was business as usual. On strategic matters, such as road and rail, HCC would lead on these with NHDC input. NHDC,

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along with HCC, were members of the following consortiums which met as required. Both officers and Members attended these meetings:

- East West Rail consortium; and
- A1(M) consortium.

NHDC was also involved in specific projects such as:

- The A1 Strategic corridor Study (this is the Highways England smart motorway upgrade between Junctions 6 and 8); and
- HCC Local Transport Plan Review and the Northern Hertfordshire Growth Plan.

At an officer level there were ongoing meetings with HCC with regard to:

- North Herts & Stevenage Officers Steering Group – to discuss transport schemes at local level emerging from the Urban Transport Plans – officers meet twice a year; and
- Highways Liaison Meeting – this is the meeting run by HCC to update Members and Parish Councillors on transport schemes and future initiatives in North Herts – this meets twice a year.

In respect of resourcing and progressing the transport work and parking review, Councillor Shakespeare-Smith explained that this was a difficult market to recruit to in finding suitable transport professionals. He was working with the respective Heads of Service to ensure that adequate resources were put in place going forward. In the interim, he had asked officers to investigate using consultants to progress outstanding areas of work.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Billing asked:

“When will all the outstanding TROs, HBARs, Yellow line appraisals and waiting restrictions and liaison with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) on a regular basis at their meetings with NHDC Members actually be able to take place, and which aren’t happening at present?”

Councillor Shakespeare-Smith reiterated his comment regarding resourcing, in that it was difficult to find suitably qualified professionals. However, he was working with officers to get these officers in place. Of the parking reviews in the District’s 4 major towns, 3 of these had been completed, with the Royston Review yet to be concluded.

Upon completion of this review, the process would start again. Part of this process was the invaluable contribution that District Councillors could make, as they became aware of issues of immediate concern to local residents. District Councillors were able to raise such issues both with their County Councillors and with him as NHDC Executive Member responsible for Transport. The issues could then be placed on a list and assessed to see if appropriate action could be taken.

(C) Communication to Members

In accordance with Standing Order 4.8.11(b), the following question had been submitted by Councillor Ian Albert to Councillor Ray Shakespeare-Smith (Cabinet Member for Policy, Transport and Green Issues):

“Could the Portfolio Holder for Policy, Transport and Green Issues outline his views for ensuring that councillors are kept informed by officers of matters of importance to their roles as effective ward councillors, so that they are not mostly informed of such matters by the press, community groups or constituents?”

Councillor Shakespeare-Smith replied that he did not accept the premise on which the question was based. He referred to the part of the question which stated “...so that they are not mostly informed of such matters by the press, community groups or constituents?”.

Councillor Shakespeare-Smith commented that everything discussed at NHDC Council and Committee meetings in one way or another impinged upon the residents of North Hertfordshire. The documentation contained in agendas was never reflected in any response that Members might see in the press or from local community groups. The information that Members received weekly in the Members’ Information Service outlined various matters, such as CCTV reports, press releases, planning applications and decision, and many other items.

Councillor Shakespeare-Smith stated that the above documentation was not provided to Members by local community groups, constituents or the press. There were other sources of information available to District Councillors, as Members were able to phone officers to discuss any matters of concern. They also had access to their County Councillors for matters relating to the County Council.

Councillor Shakespeare-Smith considered that the premise that Members were mostly informed of issues by local community groups, constituents or the press was, in his opinion, totally false. However, what Members were informed about were small issues that sometimes appeared as headline news in the local press or that constituents from time to time contacted them about. It was regrettable, but inevitable, in an organisation the size of NHDC, with over 3,000 statutory responsibilities, that situations arose of which the Council was unaware, and was therefore not always in a position to inform councillors.

Councillor Shakespeare-Smith concluded by reassuring Members that NHDC took criticism and questions about its services seriously, and always tried to address these to the best of its ability.

Councillor Albert referred to particular issues where he felt that communications to Members should have been better, such as Bancroft Park, Hitchin Town Football Club, Radcliffe Arms planning application, Funfair location on Ransomes Recreation Ground, Hitchin Swimming Pool and North Hertfordshire Museum/Hitchin Town Hall, and the recent Hitchin Air Quality survey. As a supplementary question, Councillor Albert asked if a cultural change was necessary at NHDC to ensure that systems were put in place to ensure that councillors were informed (by e-mail if necessary) when urgent and important issues arose so that they were not made first aware of such issues by reading local newspapers?.

Councillor Shakespeare-Smith did not accept that the organisational culture referred to by Councillor Albert existed at NHDC. He referred to the Member/Officer protocol on working relationships contained in the Council's Constitution, which detailed the responsibilities of councillors and officers. If Councillor Albert believed that officers were not abiding by that protocol then it would be an issue that the Council would need to look at most carefully.

Councillor Shakespeare-Smith responded to two of the examples quoted by Councillor Albert. In respect of Hitchin Town Football Club, no reference had been made in the press article to the fact that the Football Club had let out a substantial parking area on its own land for use by Avis Cars. In respect of Hitchin Swimming Pool, he reminded Councillor Albert that they both been present at the Hitchin Committee meeting where that item had been presented, and which later appeared as a complaint on the front page of the Comet newspaper. The presenter of the complaint admitted himself that his immediate response was to use social media to "vent his spleen" and, as a consequence, he received a large number of "followers". What he had failed to do was to phone the Council or Stevenage Leisure Limited to report the complaints. How was the Council therefore able to respond to a complaint which had not even been reported to it.

Councillor Shakespeare-Smith concluded by stating that items were often seen in the local press which did not give the full story, and that this should be borne in mind by members when reading articles. He encouraged Members to phone appropriate officers to receive the full details of items which appeared in the local press.

31 NOTICE OF MOTIONS

There were no notices of motions.

The meeting closed at 9.43 pm

Chairman