

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

HITCHIN COMMITTEE

**MEETING HELD IN THE PETER MORRISON HALL,
BENSLOW MUSIC SCHOOL, BENSLOW LANE, HITCHIN
ON TUESDAY, 5TH JUNE, 2018 AT 7.30 PM**

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors Ian Albert (Chairman), Clare Billing (Vice-Chairman), Judi Billing, Val Bryant, Paul Clark, Sam Collins, Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, Nicola Harris, Simon Harwood, Mike Hughson, Bernard Lovewell and Martin Stears-Handscomb*

In Attendance: *Claire Morgan (Senior Communities Officer), Milan Johnston (Communities Assistant) and Hilary Dineen (Acting Committee and Member Services Manager)*

Also Present: *At the commencement of the meeting Councillor Gary Grindal and 25 members of the public*

4 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio Recording – Start of Item – Session 1 - 36 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Richard Thake.

5 MINUTES - 6 MARCH 2018

Audio Recording – Start of Item – Session 1 - 1 minute 23 seconds

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 6 March 2018 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

6 MINUTES - 17 MAY 2018

Audio Recording – Start of Item – Session 1 - 1 minute 35 seconds

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 17 May 2018 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

7 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio Recording – Start of Item – Session 1 - 1 minute 45 seconds

There was no other business notified.

8 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio Recording – Start of Item – Session 1 - 2 minutes 19 seconds

- (1) The Chairman thanked those who had attended Town Talk and welcomed those who were speaking at Public Participation;

- (2) The Chairman welcomed Hector, a student working with Committee Services for a week to find out how Council's work;
- (3) The Chairman thanked Councillor Harris for her Chairmanship last year and those who were no longer on the Committee – Former Councillors Alan Millard, Frank Radcliffe, Ray Shakespeare-Smith and Adrian Smith;
- (4) The Chairman welcomed the new Members to this Committee, Councillors Clare Billing, Val Bryant, Sam Collins and Mike Hughson;
- (5) The Chairman reminded Members that, in accordance with Council policy, this meeting was being audio recorded, members of the public may use their own devices to record the meeting or take photographs, but ensure that the meeting was not disrupted;
- (6) The 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;
- (7) The Chairman stated that he was proud to be serving as Chairman of this Committee. The Hitchin Committee worked well, in a collaborative way, to meet the needs of the residents and he hoped that this would continue in the future;
- (8) The Chairman welcomed Councillor Michael Weeks, Executive Member for Waste, Recycling and Environment, who would be answering questions regarding the waste contract;
- (9) The Chairman advised that he had asked for a report on Churchgate and had received the following response from the Deputy Chief Executive:

“There is nothing that is able to be reported in time for this meeting. Work continues to try to establish whether there is a deliverable proposal and, if so, how it would be delivered. Further to the recent Members Information Service note we expect to have the analysis of the consultation responses available soon and will notify members in advance of this being published. I anticipate that by the date of the next meeting there will be more information to report to you and if there is a need for any substantive decisions by Full Council prior to the next Hitchin Committee meeting it may be possible to have an extraordinary meeting, subject to the requirements of the Council's Constitution.”
- (10) The Chairman advised that he had agreed to take the Item entitled Hitchin Bid Manager immediately following Public Participation.

9 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - 11TH HITCHIN (HOLY SAVIOUR) GUIDES

Audio Recording – Start of Item – Session 1 - 6 minutes 54 seconds

Prior to the presentation Councillor Paul Clark declared a declarable interest in that his wife was Divisional Commissioner of the Girl Guides.

Ms Jo Clinch, 11th Hitchin (Holy Saviour), Guides thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee in support of their grant application and informed Members of the following:

- Girl Guiding was the leading charity for girls in the UK;
- Girl Guiding encouraged girls to do their best and face the challenges of today;

Tuesday, 5th June, 2018

- It had been providing challenges, and friendship for over 100 years;
- The 11th Hitchin Guides was a large and very busy unit;
- Activities included outdoor skills, cookery, crafts and science;
- At least 4 residential opportunities were offered throughout the year;
- The guides made their own decisions about what they did and with support and guidance carried out their plans;
- They were taught life skills and offered opportunities to undertake activities that they would not otherwise get the chance to do;
- Whilst at camp the girls washed up, cooked and learnt to look after themselves, giving them skills for the future;
- The more adventurous activities taught them that they can do anything with the right support;
- Guiding gave the girls a safe place to discover that sometimes things do not work out as planned and they learn that it is OK to fail occasionally;
- They learn to work with others, take the lead and support each other.

Ms Clinch introduced Kirsten and Kesia, members of the unit.

Kirsten told Members that she liked Guides as she made new friends, she liked the community projects and doing the outdoor activities. She was always learning new things such as life skills ie cooking.

Kesia informed Members that she had been a Guide for 4 years and always appreciated learning life skills and had been given many opportunities and learned things she never thought she would.

Ms Clinch advised that fundraising and extra support was always needed to keep the unit going.

They would have 40 guides from September 2018 with the cost of books for each guide costing £11.50 and other resources costing £60 per guide.

They would like to buy litter pickers to help with the clean up Hitchin campaign at the Dell and more equipment for their camping trips.

Members expressed support for the guiding and scouting movements. They commented that these movements did great work, but did not publicise themselves and the work they did in the community enough.

In response to questions from Members Ms Clinch advised that summer events would include DIY, camping, Herts County Camp, a trip to Southampton and fundraising events.

The Chairman thanked Ms Clinch, Kirsten and Kesia for their presentation.

10 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - BRITISH SCHOOLS MUSEUM

Audio Recording – Start of Item – Session 1 - 17 minutes 42 seconds

Prior to the item being discussed Councillor Nicola Harris declared a declarable interest as she was the Council representative on the British Schools Museum.

Sam Mason, Manager of the British Schools Museum, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and informed Members of the following:

- The British Schools Museum was a registered charity;
- The school was founded in 1810 in order to bring education to the poor;
- The school remained operational until its closure in 1969;

Tuesday, 5th June, 2018

- The British School Trust was established in 1991 and the building opened in 1996;
- The Museum hosted events for both private and community groups and had extensive collections;
- The Museum had 13,100 visitors each year;
- The Museum was a tourist destination, bringing people into Hitchin;
- They had 120 active volunteers, 12 of which signed up in the last month and a further 30 potential volunteers identified;
- They had just signed up to Youth Connexions, offering work placements, which would help with the longevity of the project;
- The main charitable aim was the preservation of building, protection of collections.

Mr Mason advised that grant funding was being requested to help with the following repairs to the school:

- The roof leaked, causing a condensation issue for the building;
- The slate roof tiles were a health and safety risk;
- Currently a roofer had to be called 3 or 4 times a year to replace tiles;
- All the roofs on the site needed to be maintained;
- There had been occasions of adverse weather when community groups had to be let down.

Mr Mason concluded by advising that if grant funding was secured, funds already held could be reallocated to other projects.

In response to questions from Members Mr Mason advised that there were originally 96 British Schools, but Hitchin was the last one remaining and that fundraising consisted of applying for grants.

The Chairman thanked Mr Mason for his presentation.

11 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - HEADWAY

Audio Recording – Start of Item – Session 1 - 25 minutes 32 seconds

Mr John Archer, Headway Herts, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee in support of their grant application and informed Members of the following:

- They looked after people with Acquired Brain Injury, who were over 18 years old and lived in the Hitchin Area;
- Work was split 50/50 between those who had suffered the injury and those caring for them;
- The carers were not expecting to be a carer and therefore Headway provide carer education and support programmes;
- The survivors had access to occupational therapists to try to get them back to meaningful activity and to give the best quality of life possible;
- Brain injury was life changing and Headway did not exclude anyone;
- Approximately 50 percent of relationships for people with brain injury broke down;
- Headway provided 1-1 visits by an occupational therapist at home and offered support with benefits, support plans, legal cases and anything else that would help make their life easier;
- Peer support groups helped survivors recognise they were not alone and gave the opportunity to get out into the community to reduce social isolation;
- The HADIT programme was run by occupational therapists for people who were high functioning and capable of getting back to work;
- Headway Herts was a County wide organisation requiring approximately £250,000 per year.

Tuesday, 5th June, 2018

Mr Archer concluded by advising that Headway Herts was requesting a total of £10,000 across three area committees to support people from the local areas.

Members acknowledged the work and support that Headway Herts offered to people with acquired brain injury.

In response to questions Mr Archer advised that they had 300 cases on their books in Hertfordshire of which 140 were active and, of those, approximately 15 were from the Hitchin area, although the number fluctuated and that survivors aged less than 18 years were supported by the Child Injury Group.

The Chairman thanked Mr Archer for his presentation.

12 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - HITCHIN CHRISTIAN CENTRE

Audio Recording – Start of Item – Session 1 – Session 1 - 34 minutes 56 seconds

Ms Jazz Minhas, Community Co-ordinator and Mr Phil Jackson, Centre Manager, Hitchin Christian Centre, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee in support of their grant application and informed Members of the following:

- They were asking for grant funding of £2,500 towards their £14,000 debt counselling centre project;
- The CAP (Christians Against Poverty) Centre was a debt counselling charity run by the wider church community since 1996;
- In Hitchin they ran a debt centre, a job club and a life skills course;
- Services ran all year round and were free to users;
- The CAP service provided a prolonged contact service offering debt payment plans and education;
- Any contribution from the Committee would enable them to run courses for longer;
- They supported families and individuals on low incomes as well as those who were unemployed and needed extra support to find work;
- The job club provided workshops regarding CV writing and confidence building and tailored workshops to meet the identified need;
- The life skills course helped families with children;
- No faith-based materials were used;
- The volunteers were all trained, with the cost of training met by CAP.

In response to questions Mr Jackson advised that:

- Their service differed from that offered by CAB. CAB offered advice and the client then had to go away and do it whereas CAP were able to guide people through the whole process;
- The main causes of debt were single mums, where the family had broken up and people whose life circumstances had suddenly changed.

Ms Minhas concluded by stating that a Herts County Council survey in 2014 showed the need for a debt counselling service in the area.

The Chairman thanked Ms Minhas and Mr Jackson for their presentation.

13 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - JOCA HITCHIN

Audio Recording – Start of Item – Session 1 - 44 minutes 24 seconds

Prior to the item being discussed Councillor Simon Harwood declared a declarable interest as he was the Council's representative on the King George V Playing Fields User Group and was

a family member of the Hitchin Rugby Club. He did not believe that this would prevent him from listening to the presentation.

Prior to the item being discussed Councillor Paul Clark declared a declarable interest as he was the Vice-President of the Hitchin Rugby Club. He did not believe this would prevent him from listening to the presentation.

Mr Richard Lucas and Mr Laurie Ray, JOCA Hitchin, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee in support of their grant application and informed Members of the following:

- The grant application was to help get a project off the ground regarding mental health;
- Welwyn Rugby Club had visited Hitchin and informed them that over an 18 month period three of their members had committed suicide;
- Suicide was one of the biggest causes of death of young males;
- The Club had a responsibility towards the members regarding mental health;
- The JOCA (Just One Click Away) charity was set up by Welwyn Rugby Club about two years ago;
- A dedicated email address had been set up, monitored and answered by volunteers, that people can contact to talk about their problems;
- The biggest challenge was awareness of the issue;
- The grant funding of £1,000 would be used to provide first responder training and awareness training for this difficult subject and the aim was to be proactive in supporting people;
- Welwyn Rugby Club supported 25 cases;
- All cases were anonymous and subjects tackled included those affected by a death, struggling with their sexuality and many other issues;
- The hope was to help prevent suicide.

In response to questions from Members Mr Lucas and Mr Ray advised:

- That JOCA had a network of training suppliers for volunteers;
- One the first response had occurred they would be able to provide funding for support services such as counselling sessions and debt advice;
- There were currently 5 first responders in place and counsellors available;
- The scheme would be available to anyone who wished to use it;
- They had people in the Club who were trained to spot the signs of mental health issues;
- They had already raised £1,500 towards this project and had further fundraising plans;
- JOCA Hitchin was in its infancy, but Welwyn were talking to the cricket club about joining the scheme.

The Chairman thanked Mr Lucas and Mr Ray for their presentation.

14 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - RHYTHMS OF THE WORLD

Audio Recording – Start of Item – Session 1 – 54 minutes 48 seconds

Mr John Brierley and Mr Alan Tomlin, Rhythms of the World, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee in support of their grant application and informed Members of the following:

- Rhythms of the World was a registered charity, run by volunteers to provide an opportunity for the local community to organise, participate and celebrate culture and the arts;
- A public meeting was held in July 2018 and the response from that meeting was that people wanted a smaller, free event in the town;

Tuesday, 5th June, 2018

- It was therefore planning to hold a family orientated music and arts event on 11 August 2018 starting at 11.30am in the High Street, which would then move to the Market Square;
- Further stages would be set up in St Mary's Church and the grounds of the church
- Music in the town would finish at 8.00pm, but would continue in Club 85 as a ticketed event;
- The aim was to make the main event free so that people had access to the event, in line with the charities' objectives;
- The event would bring people in the community together;
- Rhythms was an important part of Hitchin life that should continue into the future;
- They were keen to get the right amount of funding in order to become sustainable;
- The requested funding would cover approximately 30 percent of the budget with the rest of the funding being raised through sponsorship from local businesses, local fundraising events and the ticket evening event.

In response to questions from Members Mr Brierley and Mr Tomlin advised:

- The last Rhythms of the World event in the town centre was in 2007;
- This would be a much smaller event than that held in 2007 and the key to reducing complaints was to finish early;
- Promotion of the event was low key and local;
- There would be no paid for acts;
- They were promoting the Rhythms of the World code and asking people not to bring alcohol to the events, to respect the town and not to litter;
- A waste and recycling service would be provided and volunteers would be patrolling regularly to pick up litter.

The Chairman thanked Mr Brierley and Mr Tomlin for their presentation.

15 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - HITCHIN RAIL COMMUTERS

Audio Recording – Start of Item – Session 1 - 1 hour 2 minutes 45 seconds

Ms Ros Southwood and Ms Becky Farrow, Hitchin Rail Commuters, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee regarding the problems faced by commuters and other rail users following the introduction of the new rail timetable and informed Members of the following:

- The Hitchin Rail Users Facebook Group was set up in April 2018 and already had 1,100 members;
- The group was initially set up as they were unhappy with the timetable proposals for May 2018;
- Users were upset with the disinformation and disorganisation that characterised the new timetable that was detrimental to commuters from Hitchin;
- The new timetable had a great impact on working parents in particular;
- The previous timetable offered great rail times, but the new version provided less flexibility and additional time commuting resulting in people having less time with their family;
- The new time table reduced the service from 4 trains to 2 at peak times in the mornings, causing overcrowding and difficulties getting to work by 9am;
- There were now fewer trains stopping at Finsbury Park and no trains stopping at this station between 7.41am and 8.10am;
- There was a loss of trains during evening peak time and the journey now took longer;
- There were slower trains across the timetable and the new rolling stock had a lot less seats which caused concern, particularly for vulnerable and disabled passengers;

Tuesday, 5th June, 2018

- Hitchin commuters had been informed that they could no longer purchase season tickets for travelling to St Pancras without paying extra, whereas St Albans passengers could purchase season tickets to cover all stations;
- In 2015/16 there were 3.2 million rail journeys;
- The past two weeks had been chaos with trains consistently being cancelled or delayed;
- In the first week of the new timetable 70 percent of trains were cancelled and less than 50 percent were on time causing stress and anxiety and, in some cases, loss of income for users;
- Critical services such as Police were being affected as Officers could not guarantee getting to work;
- Wheelchair users were finding it almost impossible to get onto the crowded trains;
- They had sent a letter to Chris Grayling with 200 signatures but as yet had not received a response;
- They had written to Charles Haughton, Govia Thameslink to ask for a meeting, but as yet had not received a response;
- They had met with Bim Afolami MP and with the Harpenden Rail Users Group to exchange ideas;
- They were discussing the possibility of a public meeting;
- Media coverage had been good with BBC Look East, 3 Counties Radio and BBC News interested.

In response to questions from Members Ms Southwood and Ms Farrow advised:

- There had been a few different issues that had caused the recent problems including that the new timetable was introduced too quickly, there were not enough drivers trained on the new routes and there were problems with the services for Brighton, which had a knock-on effect on services further up the line.
- Timetables should have been published 12 weeks in advance but were published just 2 weeks before implementation;

Ms Southwood concluded by asking anyone in the Rail User Group with specialist skills to make themselves known, as there was still a lot of work to do.

Members expressed gratitude for the work that the Rail Users Group had done and for highlighting the issues being faced.

The Chairman thanked Ms Southwood and Ms Farrow for their presentation.

Members discussed the many problems faced by commuters at present and the issues that had caused those problems.

One Member advised that there was a new tunnel linking Finsbury Park to St Pancras and that there were not enough drivers trained to go through this tunnel.

Members noted that the deadline for submissions regarding the December timetable was 22 June 2018.

It was proposed and seconded that the Committee issue a statement laying out their concerns about the new timetable, cancellations and delays of scheduled train services and the effect this was having on Commuters travelling from Hitchin.

Members acknowledged that the Committee did not have jurisdiction over transport issues, but were supportive of the statement.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Hitchin Committee agree and issue the following statement:

The Hitchin Committee is deeply concerned that the rail industry has failed to look after the interests of Hitchin residents in the planning and subsequent implementation of the Railplan 20/20 timetable changes.

In particular, the Committee is shocked that the changes have clearly been ill thought out, led to many hundreds of cancellations and ignored the warnings and concerns voiced by Hitchin Commuters over many weeks and months. This has led to huge amounts of stress and anxiety for travellers and their families with no certainty on journey times and regular overcrowding, which is likely to continue for weeks to come.

Ticketing arrangements are clearly confusing, inconsistent and irrational and need urgent attention and rationalisation.

We call upon Network Rail, Thameslink and Great Northern to publish the risk assessment carried out prior to these changes, details of its consultations with users and details of the remedial actions it will take to correct mistakes and careless timetabling and ticketing, which are clearly to the detriment of many groups of train travellers.

We will work closely with residents and with local Rail Groups such as Hitchin Rail Commuters and Hitchin Rail Users Group to help ensure remedial and new train timetables are fit for purpose and that disastrous changes like this can never happen again.”

- (2) That the above statement be sent to Bim Afolami MP, Network Rail, Thameslink and Great Northern Railways.

16 WASTE AND RECYCLING CONTRACT

Audio Recording – Start of Item – Session 1 – 1 hour 40 minutes 54 seconds

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Weeks, Executive Member for Waste, Recycling and Environment, and thanked him for agreeing to attend this meeting.

Councillor Michael Weeks, Executive Member for Waste, Recycling and Environment, thanked the Chairman for the invitation to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding the issues and problems that had occurred since the introduction of the new waste contract as follows:

- The waste contract was in some disarray, for which he apologised;
- The issues were operational and the Council did not have a lot of control over these issues;
- The main issue was regarding residents who had paid on-line for brown bin collections that had not been collected;
- The data regarding several thousand properties was not transferred to the Urbaser system;
- Some of the rounds were not accurately recorded on Urbaser’s system resulting in areas where streets were missed;
- Whilst it was believed that most of the staff would transfer to Urbaser a number of staff did not do so for various reasons;
- The new vehicles were not in place at the start of the contract resulting in a lot of hired vehicles being used;

Tuesday, 5th June, 2018

- The hired vehicles were not up to the job, but these had now been replaced with more appropriate vehicles;
- The delivery of food caddies was 1500 caddies short. This was solved by borrowing stocks from East Herts District Council.

In response to these issues, Urbaser made the decision to collect every brown bin. This was seen as an opportunity to catch up, although this had now ceased.

Urbaser were throwing tens of thousands of pounds and as much resource as possible at the contract.

There were a lot of new and agency staff and Urbaser were undertaking appropriate staff training.

A statement was issued today as follows:

“Councillor Michael Weeks, NHDC’s Executive Member for Waste, Recycling and Environment said:

Unfortunately, at the start of our new contract with Urbaser there had been some issues with the reliability of data held for those customers who have signed up to the garden waste service, this has led to a number of brown bins being missed on several collection dates.

Urbaser have been working hard to catch up with collecting missed bins, however, given the inconvenience this caused, last week they decided to collect any brown bins that were put out for collection as a short term measure whilst the issues are worked on.

Urbaser are now confident that they have identified the data issue and therefore they will shortly be reverting to only collecting brown bins that have been paid for. The operation will be kept under close review.”

In response to Members observations, concerns and questions, the Executive Member for Waste, Recycling and Environment advised:

- Food caddy collections were an issue and this may be due to the operatives concentrating on collection of the brown bins;
- There were a lot of inexperienced staff, which may have resulted in the minor collections, such as batteries and sharps, not being collected and this could be a training issue;
- There had not yet been time to fully investigate why the issues occurred as staff had been entirely focussed on mobilising the contract;
- The number of phone lines remained an issue, although the number of phone calls received was reducing;
- There were penalty clauses in the contract regarding performance, but this was not being considered at the moment. The focus at the moment was on getting the service up and running;
- The reputation of the Council in respect of waste was currently rock bottom, it was hoped that the problems with the waste collection would be resolved soon;
- Ultimately waste collection staff would be fully employed rather than using a high number of agency staff.

Other comments made by Members included:

- It would be nice for residents who paid for the garden waste collection to get an extension of one month as an apology;
- It was disappointing that the response to queries about identifying who had paid for the brown bin collection was to put the house number in the bin;

Tuesday, 5th June, 2018

- When would a high-tech solution be provided to identify which brown bins would be collected;
- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee should be able to see the actual contract when reviewing the service;
- It was important to ensure that the issues did not result in any costs to the Council.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Weeks for agreeing to attend the meeting and commented that Executive Members attending local meetings to answer questions was very important.

The Chairman announced there would be a short comfort break.

17 GRANTS AND COMMUNITY UPDATE

Audio Recording – Start of Item – Session 2 – 16 seconds

The Senior Communities Officer presented the report of the Communities Manager entitled Grants and Community update and drew attention to the following:

Update on Previous Grants awarded and Community Engagement

Paragraph 8.2.1 detailed a list of organisations providing a counselling service that had received funding from Area Committee budgets in the last 2 years.

Section 106 funding

Paragraph 8.2.4 gave details of the amount of Section 106 funding available for suitable capital projects.

If members had suggestions for projects that these amounts might be used for they could contact the Communities Officer.

Members were reminded that the way Section 106 funding was collected had changed and that the Communities Team were collating any future requirements in terms of capital funds to support larger scale community needs. These would be communicated to planning officers to assist when negotiating any new agreements with prospective developers.

If members had any suggestions of suitable projects or requirements within their wards the should inform the Communities Officer.

Update on information requested regarding Churchgate

The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that officers were fully aware of the steps that lead from the riverside up to St Mary's Square and the inscription on them.

Budgets

The budget for 2018/19 was £13,700

The amount carried forward from 2017/18 was £13,131

The total amount available for grant funding was therefore £26,831.

The total of the grant funding requests presented to this meeting was £13,826.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the budgetary expenditure, balances and carry forwards from the Development and Visioning Budgets be noted;
- (2) That the actions taken by the Community Development Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being Hitchin be endorsed;

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

18 GRANT APPLICATION - 11TH HITCHIN (HOLY SAVIOUR) GUIDES

Audio Recording – Start of Item – Session 2 – 6 minutes 29 seconds

Prior to the item being discussed Councillor Paul Clark declared a declarable interest in that his wife was Divisional Commissioner of the Girl Guides.

RESOLVED: That grant funding of £1,500 be awarded to 11th Hitchin (Holy Saviour) Guides from the 2017/18 Discretionary Budget towards the cost of providing summer activities, outings and equipment.

REASON FOR DECISION: To improve services provided by local organisations and groups which are accessed by the community.

19 GRANT APPLICATION - BRITISH SCHOOLS MUSEUM

Audio Recording – Start of Item – Session 2 – 6 minutes 44 seconds

Prior to the item being discussed Councillor Nicola Harris declared a declarable interest as she was the Council representative on the British Schools Museum.

RESOLVED: That grant funding of £1,320 be awarded to the British Schools Museum from the 2017/18 Discretionary Budget towards the cost of essential roof maintenance.

REASON FOR DECISION: To improve services provided by local organisations and groups which are accessed by the community.

20 GRANT APPLICATION - HEADWAY

Audio Recording – Start of Item – Session 2 – 6 minutes 53 seconds

The Communities Officer advised that this request for a total of £10,000 grant funding had been split between Hitchin, Letchworth and Baldock area committees

It was noted that Baldock and District Committee had not provided any grant funding in respect of this request.

In response to questions the Senior Communities Officer advised that:

- Southern Rural had not been asked for a contribution as Headway only said they supported people in the areas mentioned, however Headway could apply to the Committee at a later date;
- That the results of the applications for grant funding made to Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation and the Peoples Post Code Lottery Fund were not yet known;
- That the Communities Team checked the accounts and finances of all grant applicants prior to presenting them to Committees;

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: That grant funding of £1,500 be awarded to Headway from the 2017/18 Discretionary Budget towards the cost of providing therapy sessions.

REASON FOR DECISION: To improve services provided by local organisations and groups which are accessed by the community.

21 GRANT APPLICATION - HITCHIN CHRISTIAN CENTRE

Audio Recording – Start of Item – Session 2 – 13 minutes 21 seconds

RESOLVED: That grant funding of £2,500 be awarded to the Hitchin Christian Centre from the 2017/18 Discretionary Budget towards the cost of providing a debt centre, job club and life skills training.

REASON FOR DECISION: To improve services provided by local organisations and groups which are accessed by the community.

22 GRANT APPLICATION - HITCHIN RUGBY CLUB

Audio Recording – Start of Item – Session 2 – 13 minutes 54 seconds

Prior to the item being discussed Councillor Simon Harwood declared a declarable interest as he was the Council's representative on the King George V Playing Fields User Group and was a family member of the Hitchin Rugby Club. He did not believe that this would prevent him from taking part in the debate and vote.

RESOLVED: That grant funding of £1,000 be awarded to Hitchin Rugby Club from the 2017/18 Discretionary Budget towards the cost of setting up their own arm of JOCA.

REASON FOR DECISION: To improve services provided by local organisations and groups which are accessed by the community.

23 GRANT APPLICATION - RHYTHMS OF THE WORLD

Audio Recording – Start of Item – Session 2 – 15 minutes 22 seconds

RESOLVED: That grant funding of £3,756 be awarded to Rhythms of the World from the 2017/18 Discretionary Budget towards the cost of providing a one day community event.

REASON FOR DECISION: To improve services provided by local organisations and groups which are accessed by the community.

24 HITCHIN BID MANAGER

Audio Recording – Start of Item – Session 1 – 1 hour 27 minutes 19 seconds

Prior to the item being discussed Councillor Judi Billing declared a declarable interest as she was a Director of Hitchin Initiative. She did not have a pecuniary interest in Hitchin BID and therefore would remain in the room for the presentation.

Mr Tom Hardy, Hitchin BID Manager, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation on the issues and activities in Hitchin as follows:

Role of the BID

The services provided using the BID levy included:

- A series of events such as the Food Festival and Christmas Light Switch On;
- Marketing events;
- Day and Night Rangers;
- Annual street cleaning such as chewing gum removal;
- Recycling of cardboard for businesses;
- Floral displays;
- An extended CCTV service;
- Taking part in Pub Watch and Shop Watch.

BID Renewal

The BID was renewable every 5 years and a new 5 year business plan had been developed.

- All 606 BID levy payers within the BID boundary would have a vote in November to decide whether the BID would continue;
- They were currently undertaking workshops, consultations, surveys and face to face visits;
- Feedback included providing training opportunities for businesses such as fire marshal training and social media and visual merchandising training;
- Looking at increasing recycling offer to include other materials;
- Considering a tourism strategy to promote the town to a wide audience;
- Looking at improving the website and increasing social media activities;
- A steering group had been set up to pull together all of the information gathered and devise a business plan;
- Keen to remain a collective voice for the businesses in the town.

Timeline for BID Renewal

- Once all of the information had been gathered an achievable BID business plan would be prepared;
- The draft business plan would be ready in August 2018;
- The AGM would be held in September 2018;
- Votes would be sent to businesses in early November 2018;
- Votes would be counted on 3 December 2018;
- The result of the ballot would be declared on 4 December 2018;
- If the result was positive the renewal would start on 1 April 2019 and run to 31 March 2024.

Items to be included in new Business Plan

- Business as usual i.e. things already doing;
- Provide a good shopping map of the town showing the 89 independent retailers and 60 eateries in the town;
- Support the Hitchin Festival to produce the programme of events;
- Working on new town and tourism guides;
- Working jointly with Hitchin Initiative to provide monthly newsletters;
- Offering GDP training to businesses.

In response to questions from Members Mr Hardy advised:

- Nationally retail was going through a difficult time;
- The BID aimed to help promote the town in order to help combat shop closures;
- Closure of large shops did have a big impact on the town, but retail units generally filled quickly in Hitchin;
- BIDS needed to remain politically impartial. When considering allowing political parties to have stalls in town centres BIDS can either say no to any political party or yes to all. If one political party is more active than others it could be perceived that the BID was favouring one party over another.
- By the end of the week floral displays would be installed in red, white and blue to recognise the First World War centenary.

The Chairman thanked Mr Hardy for his presentation.

25 ISSUES AND EVENTS IN THE HITCHIN AREA

Audio Recording – Start of Item – Session 2 – 15 minutes 38 seconds

The Chairman advised that this item was to cover issues such as the waste and rail problems, which had both been discussed at this meeting.

Walsworth Festival

Councillor Lovewell reported that the 44th Walsworth Festival had taken place on a lovely sunny day and was another successful community event.

This event was entirely dependent on the work of the volunteers and a plea would be going out for more volunteers to take part.

26 ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AT FUTURE MEETINGS

Audio Recording – Start of Item – Session 2 – 15 minutes 34 seconds

Members asked for reports to be presented to the next meeting of this Committee on the following subjects:

- Former Hitchin Museum Building (Charnwood)
To include clear timescales regarding the storage for the Museum Service, the repairs to ensure the building is kept to a proper standard and when the building would be surplus to requirements and available for community use;
- Air Quality in Hitchin.

The Chairman drew attention to the long list of items that had been put forward for discussion in the past. He would consider how some of those items could be timetabled into future agendas.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Service Director - Resources be requested to present a report regarding the former Hitchin Museum building (Charnwood) to the next meeting of this Committee, to include information on the issues discussed above;
- (2) That the Environmental Health Manager be requested to provide a report regarding air quality in Hitchin to the next meeting of this Committee.

REASON FOR DECISION: To keep the Hitchin Committee apprised of issues affecting the area.

27 WARD MATTERS AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS - MEMBERS' REPORTS

Audio Recording – Start of Item – Session 2 – 19 minutes 55 seconds

Development of Blue Hearts Hockey Club

Councillor Harwood expressed concern that the construction traffic element of the development regarding Blue Hearts Hockey Club was not included in the development agreement and that there was no mechanism to complain about the large lorries using inappropriate routes to the site.

Councillor Stears-Handscomb advised that there was a question to Overview and Scrutiny regarding access to development sites, with an answer due in the autumn. It was important that the public understand what can and cannot be done.

Outside Organisations

It was suggested that Members provide written reports regarding their work with outside bodies.

RESOLVED: That Members be requested to forward written reports regarding their work with outside bodies to the Acting Committee and Member Services Manager, these reports will be

Tuesday, 5th June, 2018

circulated to all Members of the Committee and included in the next available agenda for information.

REASON FOR DECISION: To keep the Hitchin Committee apprised of the work and activities in wards and associated with outside bodies.

The meeting closed at 10.05 pm

Chairman