

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

HITCHIN COMMITTEE

**MEETING HELD IN THE WESTMILL COMMUNITY CENTRE, JOHN BARKER PLACE.
HITCHIN ON TUESDAY, 4TH DECEMBER, 2018 AT 7.30 PM**

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors Ian Albert (Chairman), Clare Billing (Vice-Chairman), Judi Billing, Val Bryant, Paul Clark, Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, Mike Hughson, Bernard Lovewell and Martin Stears-Handscorb*

In Attendance: *Peter Carey (Environmental Health Manager), David Carr (Environmental Protection Officer Cont. Land), Claire Morgan (Senior Communities Officer) and Hilary Dineen (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager)*

52 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio Recording of Meeting – Start time of Item – 24 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from the following Councillors:

Councillor Nicola Harris
Councillor Simon Harwood
Councillor Sam Collins
Councillor Richard Thake

53 MINUTES - 5 JUNE 2018

Audio Recording of Meeting – Start time of Item – 1 minute 2 seconds

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 5th June be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

54 MINUTES - 11 SEPTEMBER 2018

Audio Recording of Meeting – Start time of Item – 1 minute 9 seconds

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 11th September 2018 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

55 MINUTES - 13 NOVEMBER 2018

Audio Recording of Meeting – Start time of Item – 1 minute 16 seconds

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 13th November 2018 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

56 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio Recording of Meeting – Start time of Item – 1 minute 25 seconds

There was no other business notified.

57 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio Recording of Meeting – Start time of Item – 1 minute 30 seconds

- (1) The Chairman welcomed those present at the meeting, especially those who had attended to give a presentation;
- (2) The Chairman advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be audio recorded;
- (3) 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.

58 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio Recording of Meeting – Start time of Item – 2 minutes 29 seconds

MEMBERS OF THE AFRICAN CARIBBEAN SENIORS & CARERS LUNCHEON CLUB

Dorothy Atkins, Vice-President of the African Caribbean Seniors & Carers Luncheon Club introduced herself and thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee regarding their grant application. She advised that she was there in support of Thelma Levy, Coordinator who did the presentation:

- The Club catered for a group of seniors and carers aged 60+ in the Afro-Caribbean community in Hitchin;
- There were approximately 60 members, 40 carers;
- Funding was to be reduced and the Club was seeking assistance with payment of the hall rental at Westmill Community Centre;
- The current rate was £88 per week, totalling £4900 approximately per year;
- The Club provided a comprehensive, holistic service for the local people which was not exclusive to the Afro-Caribbean community;
- In addition to lunch, the Club also provided seated exercise to allow people to remain active and mobile which enabled them to remain in their homes longer than they would do if they were not having these exercises;
- This would also reduce the burden on Social Services as many people would have to go into residential care if they were unable to remain in their own homes;
- A £12 annual membership fee was payable for expenses;

In response to a question from Counsellor Judi Billing, Thelma Levy replied:

- They did not receive assistance from the Forum. They do obtain office space from the Forum for which they paid rent however received no help from them. Councillor Judi Billing advised there might be available funding from their locality budget and advised there were three Councillors who covered Hitchin and might offer help and support but they would need to ask them for specific funding towards the project. Councillor Judi Billing offered to provide assistance as to how to contact the County Councillors concerned.

In response to a question from Councillor Clare Billing, Dorothy Atkins replied:

- To bridge the funding gap every two years, they were always looking at ways of fundraising. They were planning an open day. They had previously had a market stall from which they sold arts and crafts made by the group;

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In response to a question from Councillor Mike Hughson, Thelma Levy replied:

- Annual budget £18000 per year. Saved £5000 last year;

Audio Recording of Meeting – Start time of Item – 13 minutes 45 seconds

FEED-UP/WARM-UP GROUP

Shane Cole Local Feed-up/Warm-up Group and thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee regarding their grant application.

- Homeless at 17 when he came out of foster care he was saved by a charity called Freedom Project which was a soup kitchen which offered counselling available for mental health, drugs/alcohol. This charity went viral on Facebook and was contacted by numerous outside agencies/councils who offered their assistance;
- He ran a catering company – CCG and was in a financial position to open his trailer to members of the public who were struggling to eat;
- Once a week, every week for three months initially but would like this to run all year and spread into Old Town Stevenage and Letchworth. It ran every Wednesday night from 6pm – 9:30pm;
- Social Services were in attendance, trained Counsellors, the mental health team, probation services, drugs/alcohol work, security,
- Volunteer open evening last week – the venue could not fit all the volunteers in the hall!
- Raised £2,300 in two weeks;
- Go Fund Me page set up and many donations received;
- Businesses in Hitchin and Letchworth had contributed;

In response to questions from Councillors:

- Shane Cole responded to the question raised by Councillor Lovewell as to how the homeless could get back on their feet and into accommodation; that when he visited the drop-in centre, he learned how to write a CV and developed interview techniques, he was provided with interview clothes and money to get public transport to attend interviews.
- Councillor Judi Billing advised that a Stevenage paper was working with Café's in Bancroft to put on an event on Christmas Day. Shane Cole had received 125+ Christmas boxes from an appeal so that he could hand them out to the elderly/homeless on Christmas Day. Shane was open on Boxing Day doing the same thing.
- Councillor Clare Billing advised that Shane had a lot of support from businesses and the local community. She knew a volunteer who was good at organising who would source more volunteers for Wednesdays. They had contacted the scout hut and church halls to discuss these events. As there was no bank account, once the pilot period was over and things were formalised, then they could speak to Shane again in March to see whether financial help was needed.
- Shane stated that eventually he would need to come away from his work trailer because if it were to go wrong at one of his pop-up food kitchens, then he would have nowhere to work. Eventually he would like to buy his own feed up/warm up trailer which would cater for 5-6 towns throughout the week and this was why the funding was required.

- Shane suggested councillors attended live Wednesday opening where they would see everything in action.

59 GRANTS & COMMUNITY UPDATE

Audio Recording – Start time of Item – 28 minutes 01 seconds

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

Regarding alternative options, there were none proposed other than those detailed in the report.

AFRICAN CARIBBEAN SENIORS & CARERS LUNCHEON CLUB

RESOLVED:

Funding of £3,500 was agreed which included an additional £1,000 which would be taken from the 2018/2019 budget

REASON FOR DECISION:

To allow services to continue and to assist with running costs.

INDIAN ART CLUB

- The community agreed by delegating decision of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman to provide £500 to support the local art club;
- Invitation sent to members to the private members and there would be an exhibition in the Friends Meeting House at the end of October/beginning of November.

HITCHIN HACK SPACE

- Progress was being made and the exterior of the building was much improved;
- By early March there should be a report on further progress so they would attend the next meeting.

HITCHIN STROKE GROUP

- Following help from the Committee they were put in contact with The Rotary Club who supported them and gave them publicity at local GP's;
- Several new members;
- Volunteer job description being drawn with a view to recruiting more volunteers in 2019.

CHAIRMAN'S VOLUNTEERS' ACHIEVEMENTS AWARDS:

- Nominations were open;
- If anyone was aware of any volunteer doing any good work within the community, they were asked to nominate them for the Chairman's Award;
- Awards would be presented at the Chairman's Reception on 8th February 2019;
- Dinner would be provided along with various prizes which included: flowers, gift vouchers, etc;
- Prizes would be sponsored by Wilmot Dixon;
- Nomination form located on the Communities page on the Council website;

YOUTH ACTION GROUPS:

In response to a question, Councillor Clare Billing confirmed:

- The High Sherriff was interested in youth volunteering and actively encouraged it. Various groups were contacted inviting them to come and talk to High Sherriff about activities. Group gave presentations to the High Sherriff.
- Liaised with all the churches about youth activities as they ran youth clubs as they worked closely with one another and knew one another. Hitchin groups worked well together;
- Previously they were not communicating with one another but this had improved;

In response to a question from Councillor Paul Clark; Councillor Clare Billing confirmed:

- Section 8.26 mentioned Section 106 funding. It was confirmed that this was only for Hitchin.

In response to a question from Councillor Judy Billing, Councillor Clare Billing confirmed:

- Previously, there had been an absence of young people at the meetings. Councillor Clare Billing confirmed that this was as the meetings had been held during the daytime when children were at school. When the presentations to the High Sherriff were done, they had however taken time out of school to do this.
- Councillors were asked by the Chairman to suggest that any groups who would benefit from a grant, to contact Councillor Clare Billing so they could be considered for the March meeting. Grants were quiet in December due to the lead up to Christmas and then there were many requests for grants in March.

60 HITCHIN BID MANAGER

Audio Recording – Start time of Item – 42 minutes 58 seconds

Councillor Tom Hardy sent his apologies however he reported that:

- Bid results had not been concluded however there was nothing specific to report and a full update would be available at the next meeting.
- The result of the ballot would be requested for circulation;

61 AIR QUALITY

Audio Recording – Start time of Item 44 minutes, 38 seconds

Presentation by Peter Carey, Environmental Health Manager and David Carr dealt with technical matters:

Thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the committee with their presentation:

- Explained public health issue, legal requirements by local authorities;
- How monitoring was carried out and pollution levels in Hitchin;
- The two air quality management areas and the action plan;

AIR POLLUTION AND HEALTH:

- World Health Organisation recognised this was a huge issue worldwide;
- Government therefore developed an air quality strategy in 1990's;
- In UK air quality had a huge impact on life expectancy and implications and costs on health with higher pollution in England;
- Air pollution impacted on climate change, environment and biodiversity;
- Smoking was biggest killer over 80,000 in 2011 (figures were out of date);
- Figure for air pollution surprising; 2nd highest issue other than other public health issues e.g. alcohol, obesity and road traffic accidents;

HEALTH EFFECTS:

- Particles: dust/microscopic pollutants and nitrogen dioxide;
- Both cause respiratory illness in addition to other effects;
- Air quality objectives UK – identifies PM10 deposit with an aerodynamic of 10 µm and 2.5 µm which affects air and the further concerns of infiltration into the respiratory system. PM 2.5 infiltrated lungs even further and caused further issues;
- Dust and soil erosion, farming activities and emissions from road vehicles, internal combustion engines – diesel identified as possible carcinogen;
- Saharan dust;
- Hitchin affected due to M1/A1;

LEGAL DUTY:

- There was a duty to review air quality;
- Where objectives were not being, the International Air Quality Strategy set out the objectives of the different pollutants;
- Where they were not met, they were legally obliged to designate an Air Quality Management Bureau which gave the reason and NHDC was responsible for development of action plan;
- Other agencies were liaised with regarding actions needed to be taken – Liaised with Hertfordshire County Council, Highways Agency and communities;
- Consultations required for development of action plan;

METHOD OF MONITORING:

- Three Moorhens roundabout – very accurate and extensive data recorded and the only one in the district.
- Properties on south side Stevenage Road monitored as close to highway;
- Large green box contained particulate monitor and nitrogen dioxide monitor - two analysers which measured different air samples from the same area – PM10 and PM 2.5 particles. Air cooler unit contained in the smaller box on the side;
- Slimline box contained nitrogen dioxide analyser located further down the road; Diffusion tube also measured nitrogen dioxide but cheaper and less accurate result (+/- 20%). If over 41g/µg/m³ – DEFRA recommended a detailed study per area to back up the data from the diffusion tube;
- Results were published on website and link on Council website to view pollution levels, trends and historical data – live data (3 hours behind);
- Spikes in readings were due to either faulty analysers or natural spikes in readings;
- London data shown to demonstrate difference to Hitchin;
- Some areas below air quality objective which was good;
- Location of sites reviewed across district by looking at trends on the diffusion tubes. Many factors taken into consideration – including concerns raised by public;

ACTION PLAN:

- Planning policy to raise the profile of air policy and ensure protections and air quality assessment on the relevant schemes;
- Publicity and raising awareness – everyone had a part to play and actions could be taken for positive impact;
- Electric vehicles reduce air pollution;
- Government grant to install charging points;
- EcoStar Project – not funded at present but planned for future to enable businesses to take action to reduce emissions;
- Air pollution alert scheme – people can sign up and get text alerts;

In response to question from Councillor Clare Billing:

- Emissions worse in the morning, afternoon/evening rush hour;
- Measures to ease traffic were needed and liaison with Hertfordshire County Council was ongoing;
- Public Health input vital;

Comment from Councillor Judi Billing:

- Departments in Councils not working together and they in turn needed to work with communities;

The Chairman thanked Peter Carey and David Carr for their presentation.

62 WARD MATTERS AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS - MEMBERS' REPORTS

Audio Recording – Start time of Item – 1 hours, 13 minutes, 42 seconds

It was agreed last time to nominate Councillors to provide a report on the organisations for which they were represented, particularly those which were Hitchin related;

- In view of Councillor Nicola Harris' apologies, it was suggested that her report be carried over to the March meeting;
- Councillor Simon Harwood sent his apologies however there was a written report;
- Councillor Clark stated Section 106 monies just 'sitting there'. Cost of field maintenance for Hitchin Rugby Club was not pecuniary;
- Councillor Clare Billing asked Councillor Clark to email her and she would forward that to Simon Ellis asking whether this was an appropriate use of 106 monies;
- Changing facilities for female players – was money available in the budget for this?

HITCHIN UNITED CHARITIES

Councillor Bernard Lovewell raised the following:

- Problems distributing money – trying to attract people to apply for that funding and there were ideas going forward;
- Provided good grants for those in need;

Councillor Martin Stears-Handscomb raised the following:

- In terms of written addendum to minutes it would be helpful to have the criteria that United Charities had for their grants;

Councillor Judi Billing raised the following:

- Hitchin Education Foundation had similar problems. It would be useful to see what the criteria were for awarding grants;

Councillor Collins was going to pick up an update around Hitchin however was away at the time of the meeting. This would be carried forward to the next meeting;

Proposal for the next meeting:

- Report for Hitchin Cow Commoners' Trust from Councillor Thake
- Museum associations – e.g. Walsworth/St Michael's
- Walsworth Festival – 19th May 2019

63 ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AT FUTURE MEETINGS

Audio Recording – Start time of Item – 1 hour, 24 minutes and 5 seconds

The following items were suggested as items to be discussed at future meeting of this Committee:

Outstanding Items:

Church Gate:

- Meeting was two weeks' ago.
- Would like an update from Anthony Roach at the March meeting.

Museum:

- A formal update was required at the March meeting;
- A final bid was due in June;

Parking Strategy Meeting:

Members and area committees were asked to give a view as to whether the parking strategy had been circulated. It was felt that it would be best to discuss this at the area committee before it went to Cabinet for discussion.

Report on Charnwood Building:

- Repairs were needed internally and externally;
- General clear out of the building was required;
- What was Council's and Officers view on the strategy for the use of the Charnwood building?

Town Council – Link road, The Dell, The Fountain, The Bridge, Potential Highover Farm Development:

- Further notes would be requested for the above;
- Highover Farm Development and any other development in the town – Committee could ask the Planning Department to consider the need for cycling and sustainable transport;
- Would Investigate the ability of the Area Committee to produce a Neighbourhood Plan for the Hitchin area despite not having come to pass previously.

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The meeting closed at 9.02 pm