

**NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**HITCHIN COMMITTEE**

**MEETING HELD IN THE TILEHOUSE STREET BAPTIST CHURCH,  
UPPER TILEHOUSE STREET, HITCHIN SG6 2EE  
ON TUESDAY, 18TH JUNE, 2019 AT 7.30 PM**

**MINUTES**

**Present:** *Councillors Ian Albert (Chairman), Clare Billing (Vice-Chairman), Val Bryant, Paul Clark, Sam Collins, Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, Keith Hoskins, Mike Hughson, Martin Stears-Handscomb, Kay Tart and Richard Thake*

**In Attendance:** *Claire Morgan (Community Engagement Team Leader), Lea Ellis (Assistant Community Engagement Officer), Katie Staddon (Assistant Community Engagement Officer) and Hilary Dineen (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager)*

**Also Present:** *At the commencement of the meeting approximately 14 members of the public..*

**4 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

*Audio recording – Start of Item – 52 seconds*

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Judi Billing and Simon Harwood.

**5 MINUTES - 4 DECEMBER 2018**

*Audio Recording – Start of Item – 1 minute 9 seconds*

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 4 December 2019 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

**6 MINUTES - 5 MARCH 2019**

*Audio recording – Start of Item – 2 minutes 10 seconds*

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager advised that the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2019 were not available. These Minutes would be presented to the next meeting of the Committee.

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 5 March 2019 be presented to the next meeting of this Committee.

**7 MINUTES - 21 MAY 2019**

*Audio recording – Start of Item – 2 minutes 24 seconds*

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 21 May 2019 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

## 8 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

*Audio recording – Start of Item – 2 minutes 33 seconds*

There was no other business notified.

## 9 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

*Audio recording – Start of Item 2 minutes 40 seconds*

- (1) The Chairman thanked those who attended Town Talk and welcomed those who were speaking at Public Participation;
- (2) The Chairman thanked those who were no longer Members of this Committee, former Councillors Nicola Harris and Bernard Lovewell;
- (3) The Chairman welcomed Councillors Keith Hoskins and Kay Tart who were new to the Committee;
- (4) The Chairman advised that, in accordance with Council policy, this meeting was being audio recorded. Members of the public and the press may use their devices to film/photograph, or do a sound recording of the meeting. Please do not use flash and disable any sound notifications that may emit from your device.
- (5) Members were 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, wishing to exercise a 'Councillor Speaking Right', must declare this at the same time as the interest, move to the public area before speaking to the item and then must leave the room before the debate and vote.

## 10 HITCHIN BID MANAGER

*Audio recording – Start of Item – 4 minutes 53 seconds*

Mr Tom Hardy, Hitchin BID Manager, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding the issues and activities in Hitchin Town Centre and drew attention to the following:

### BID Update

- There were some new Town Centre Rangers;
- There were some new Night Rangers, working on Friday and Saturday nights from 10.30pm to 3.30 am;  
Their remit was to concentrate on public wellbeing, directing people to venues and improve security;  
The Night Rangers report weekly to the BID Manager
- Consideration was being given to improving the quality CCTV in Churchgate and the Arcade in order to support the Police with any potential prosecutions;
- The commercial waste discount scheme had been restarted, which consisted of a mass procurement initiative;
- The Cardboard collection scheme was being continued with approx. 2 tonnes collected each month, which was then compacted and recycled;

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- A new coffee grounds recycling scheme was being started. The grounds were sent to a recycling plant where they were compacted into logs for burning on wood burners. These logs were good for the environment as they were 80 percent more efficient to burn than wood;
- A new contractor had been appointed for the Christmas lights;
- NHDC had previously provided a Christmas tree for the Town. The BID would from now on be sourcing a Christmas tree this year with funds provided by NHDC;
- Floral displays were in place, they had been spread out around the Town;
- Work was starting on a Tourism Strategy with the aim of promoting Hitchin as a destination venue. The BID was looking to bring key people together to contribute to the Strategy and consider how it would be delivered;
- They were looking at improvements to the BID office and to provide more Hitchin based products;
- They were working with NHDC on a deep clean and chewing gum removal in the Town Centre, this was due to start on 24 June 2019.

#### Events

- This year events would be business based;
- Street dates have been increased;
- Beach week would make a return;
- Food Fest;
- Hitchin Rocks Music Day;
- Christmas Lights Switch on would be held on Saturday 30 November 2019.

#### Awards to Hitchin Businesses

- Etcetera received Retailer of the Year for the second year running;
- Gatwoods received Family Business of the Year.

#### Hitchin Market

- Residents and businesses see the Market as more than a commercial entity, but also as an historical asset to the Town;
- It was acknowledged that an application had been submitted for Future Towns Funding;
- It was felt that the Market deserved consideration in its own right;
- Action Zone funding was available through Historic England;
- Hitchin Market was keen to submit an application, but needed support from the Council;
- Mr Hardy therefore asked Hitchin Committee to support such an expression of Interest in applying for the funding.

The following Members asked questions and took part in the debate:

- Councillor Richard Thake;
- Councillor Keith Hoskins;
- Councillor Martin Stears-Handscorn;
- Councillor Paul Clark;
- Councillor Ian Albert;
- Councillor Kay Tart;
- Councillor Mike Hughson.

The main points of the discussion were that:

- That a review of pedestrianisation be undertaken;
- The timing of waste collections;
- The principal of submitting applications for funding was supported, but the Committee was unable to support an application that they had not seen

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That Hitchin Committee is supportive of the principal of Hitchin Market applying for external funding;
- (2) That the Hitchin BID Manager be requested to circulate details of the funding applied for and the application to all Members of the Committee;
- (3) That the Executive Member for Enterprise and Co-Operative Development be requested to discuss this proposal with Officers and take the matter forward.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To consider the proposed expression of interest for funding by Hitchin Market.

**11 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - WHOLESOME WEIGH**

*Audio recording – Start of Item – 27 minutes 43 seconds*

Ms Aimee Valinski and Eve, Wholesome Weigh, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding the future of Churchgate Shopping Centre. The main points of the presentations were:

- Wholesome Weigh was an eco shop trading in Churchgate;
- They sold more than 50 fair trade products;
- They promoted plastic free, workers rights and other matters;
- They held talks and educational and documentary movie nights;
- They also shared knowledge regarding growing food;
- They were speaking in behalf of the Churchgate Community Group who wished to protect the traders in Churchgate;
- The group had been formed in response to the interest in the regeneration of Churchgate;
- The aim was to ensure that any future plans take into account the current independent businesses and traders;
- They had started a petition demanding that the Council ensures minimal disruption to the businesses;
- If the current proposal was successful it result in the devastation of the Churchgate community;
- They would be campaigning further, by various methods including a photographic exhibition in celebration of Churchgate and the Market:
- Churchgate offered an array of community shops;
- Churchgate was in need of maintenance, but they opposed the idea of regeneration which would jeopardise the current businesses and traders;
- In light of the Council's recent actions regarding the climate emergency, this should be factored in to any plans for Churchgate.

The following Members asked questions or made comment on the presentation:

- Councillor Sam Collins;
- Councillor Ian Albert;
- Councillor Mike Hughson.

In response to questions Ms Valinski advised:

- That they were passionate about their livelihood and that regeneration impact massively on that;
- Churchgate needed improvement but not to the scale suggested;
- Build works would cause total disruption to the businesses
- The Churchgate Community Group needed to be included in discussions regarding Churchgate.

The Chairman thanked Aimee and Eve for their presentation.

## **12 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - 8TH OUGHTON SCOUTS**

*Audio recording – Start of Item – 37 minutes 53 seconds*

Ms Hazel Beadle, Group Scout Leader of 8<sup>th</sup> Oughton Scouts, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding their grant application as follows:

- They held their meetings at Oughton School on Wednesdays;
- They had been running for 6 years and were a growing group currently numbering 20 Beavers, 30 Cubs and 12 Scouts;
- Approximately 60 percent of children were from the Westmill area;
- There was a new section of badges called Community Impact Badgers and the Group wanted to look at the environment, particularly plastic awareness;
- They were seeking funding to purchase litter pickers and gloves so that they could clear up the school and the local area;
- The children took great pride in their area;
- When litter picking the children learnt about recycling;
- They also wished to replace their foam balls, used for playing games.

Ray, of the cubs informed the Committee that he enjoyed litter picking. It was fun as he liked helping the environment by picking up litter that hadn't been put in bins.

The following Members asked made comment and asked questions:

- Councillor Richard Thake;
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg.

The Chairman thanked Hazel and Ray for their presentation.

### 13 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - BUZZWORKS

*Audio recording – Start of Item – 45 minutes 13 seconds*

Anne Taylor and Chris Parker thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding their grant application as follows:

- Buzzworks was a small local charity run entirely by volunteers;
- They had 7 trustees and 20 active volunteers;
- The remaining membership was made up of local beekeepers and members of the public;
- Income was approximately £8,000 per annum and costs were about £6,000;
- The primary aim was to educate the public, particularly children about the importance of bees to the environment and what we can do to ensure their survival;
- They ran 3 free to enter family open days a year on the educational site, visited local schools and invited schools and other organisations to visit the educational site;
- Honey bees were at risk from pests and diseases’
- The second aim was to encourage and train new beekeepers;
- They had a second site that contain the main apiary;
- They sold honey at Hitchin Market and made some charges for the educational and training visits;
- They were seeking grant funding of £915 to refurbish the education centre by purchasing a projector and screen that would enhance the centre and could be used when visiting schools.

The following member asked questions:

- Councillor Sam Collins;
- Councillor Clare Billing;
- Councillor Richard Thake;
- Councillor Paul Clark;
- Councillor Ian Albert.

In response to questions Ms Taylor stated that they were happy to advise on plants that would encourage bees.

Mr Parker advised that:

- They had 26 hives and that at any time 50 percent of the bees would be out foraging;
- The number of bees was in decline;
- Bees could be fed with sugar water.

The Chairman thanked Ms Taylor and Mr Parker for their presentation.

### 14 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - CREATIVES

*Audio recording – Start of Item – 1 hour 0 minutes 10 seconds*

Councillor Ian Albert declared a pecuniary interest in that he had made a donation to Creatives. He stated that he would listen to the debate, but would leave the room during the debate and vote regarding the grant application.

Councillor Richard Thake declares a pecuniary interest in that he had granted Creatives funding from his County Council Locality Budget. He stated that he would listen to the debate, but would leave the room during the debate and vote regarding the grant application.

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Amanda Ashley and Linda, Creatives, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation in support of their grant application as follows:

- Creatives was set up to offer the youths of Hitchin somewhere they could go rather than be on the streets;
- The vision was to educate the young people and offer them skills such as art, hair and beauty, that they could put on a CV;
- They were hoping to run some workshops;
- The grant application was for IT equipment that would enable recording and filming;
- They wanted to engage with the community;
- Rhythms of the World was supporting them to show the young people what they could do.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Kay Tart.

Responses to questions included:

- They had held a disco event to which approx. 100 children attended;
- IT had been a great success with no issues;
- They did have some licensing issues that they hoped would be resolved;

Councillor Albert advised that Councillor Judi Billing was talking to Council Officers regarding the licensing issues.

The Chairman thanked Amanda and Linda for their presentation.

## **15 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - HITCHIN FORUM**

*Audio recording – Start of Item – 1 hour 6 minutes*

Councillor Paul Clark declared a declarable interest in that he was a member of Hitchin Forum. He advised that he would listen to the presentation, but would leave the room during the debate and vote regarding the grant application.

Councillor Kay Tart declared a declarable interest in that she was a member of Hitchin Forum. She advised that she would listen to the presentation, but would leave the room during the debate and vote regarding the grant application.

Mike Clarke, Hitchin Forum, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation in support of their grant application as follows:

- They were requesting grant funding of £1,500 towards the cost of gazebos for community events;
- The current canopies were split and needed replacing.

The Chairman thanked Mike Clarke for his presentation.

## **16 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - STRATHMORE FUN CLUB**

*Audio recording – Start of Item – 1 hour 8 minutes 25 seconds*

Lisa King, Treasurer of the Strathmore Fun Club, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding their grant application as follows:

- Hitchin Fun Club was based at Highover School;
- It was a not for profit organisation;
- It was a safe place for 4-12 year olds to play and take part in activities;
- They had 35 children attend each day;
- There was a stable staff team;
- The application was for £1,500 to support with payment of rent and running costs;
- Rent was between £22 and £28 per day;
- Savings were needed to cover any issues such as redundancies or when there was cash flow problems;
- Any grant funding would mean that they would have sufficient to buy equipment and to go on visits such as to the British School Museum;
- They had a new children's allotment project on land gifted by Highbury School and they need to buy a shed for this.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Ian Albert
- Councillor Kay Tart

In response to questions Lisa advised that:

- Charges were £8.60 per day;
- Children mainly came from the Highbury area of Hitchin.

In response to a query the Community Engagement Team Leader advised that the Committee could grant funds for running costs for one year on;y.

The Chairman thanked Lisa for her presentation.

## **17 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - TILEHOUSE PRE-SCHOOL**

*Audio recording – Start of Item – 1 hour 17 minutes 33 seconds*

Councillor Martin Stears-Handscomb declared a declarable interest in that he was a member of the Baptist Church. He advised that he would listen to the presentation but would take no part in the debate and vote regarding the grant application.

The Chairman of Tilehouse Pre-School thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding their application for grant funding as follows:

- This was a facility that catered for early years (2 – school age);
- It was a charity in receipt of Local Authority funding;
- It had been operational for 15 years'
- It was run by the community and had volunteer trustees;
- The application was for £1,300 to purchase two computers and a tablet.
- These would be used to maintain children's records and development;
- Improved running would benefit all of the families;
- They supported families and offered outreach;
- They had changed their constitution so that they could continue as part of the churches family;
- Approximately 35 – 40 families were supported.

The Chairman thanked Tilehouse Pre-School for their presentation.



## 18 GRANTS AND COMMUNITY UPDATE

*Audio recording – Start of Item – 1 hour 23 minutes 54 seconds.*

The Community Engagement Team Leader presented the report entitled Grants and Community Update and drew attention to the following:

### Policy and Community Engagement Team Restructure

The Team had been restructured as detailed in the report.

### Funding agreed in 2007 for Radio Equipment

Radio equipment funded by the Committee was having to be relocated and a venue was being sought to house it.

Members suggested that Creatives might be a suitable venue to house and make use of the equipment and asked that the Community Engagement Team Leader discuss this with them.

### The Hitchin Museum Building

Councillors Keith Hoskins and Ian Albert had visited the building on separate occasions.

Councillor Hoskins was asked to organise a visit by the Charnwood group

### Walsworth Festival

This had been a well attended event.

### Rhythms of the World (ROTW)

This event would take place on 29 June 2019 at Hitchin Town Hall.

### **RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the Committee endorses the actions taken by the Community Engagement officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being for Hitchin;
- (2) That the Community Engagement Team Leader be requested to discuss possible relocation of radio equipment with Creatives.

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

## 19 GRANT APPLICATION - 8th OUGHTON SCOUTS

*Audio recording – Start of Item – 1 hour 33 minutes 31 seconds.*

**RESOLVED:** That grant funding of £712 be awarded to 8<sup>th</sup> Oughton Scouts towards the cost of litter picking and sports equipment.

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

**20 GRANT APPLICATION - BUZZWORKS**

*Audio recording – Start of Item – 1 hour 35 minutes 2 seconds.*

Councillor Richard Thake declared an interest and stated that he would not take part in the vote.

**RESOLVED:** That grant funding of £915 be awarded to Buzzworks towards the cost of refurbishing their classroom.

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

**21 GRANT APPLICATION - CREATIVES**

*Audio recording – Start of Item – 1 hour 36 minutes 30 seconds*

Councillor Ian Albert had previously declared a pecuniary interest in that he had made a donation to Creatives and advised that he would leave the room during the debate and vote regarding the grant application.

Councillor Richard Thake had previously declare a pecuniary interest in that he had granted Creatives funding from his County Council Locality Budget and advised that he would leave the room during the debate and vote regarding the grant application.

Councillor Albert and Thake left the room

Councillor Billing took the Chair.

The Community Engagement Tewam Leader advised that, at present, Creatives was registered as a ltd company, hoever they were in the process of registering as a charity.

If the Committee were minded to allocate this grant funding, the fund would not be released until the status of their registration is confirmed.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That grant funding of £1,500 be allocated to Creatives towards the cost IT Equipment for their youth facility;
- (2) That funding be released once the status of the registration of Creatives has been confirmed.

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

Councillors Albert and Thake returned to the room.

Councillor Albert returned to the chair.

**22 GRANT APPLICATION - HITCHIN FORUM**

*Audio recording – Start of Item – 1 hour 38 minutes 36 seconds*

**RESOLVED:** That grant funding of £1,500 be awarded to Hitchin Forum towards the cost of purchasing Gazebos for community events.

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

**23 GRANT APPLICATION - TILEHOUSE PRE-SCHOOL**

*Audio recording – Start of Item – 1 hour 39 minutes 40 seconds*

Councillor Martin Stears-Handscomb had previously declared a declarable interest in that he was a member of the Baptist Church and advised that he would take no part in the debate and vote regarding the grant application.

**RESOLVED:** That grant funding of £1,000 be awarded to Tilehouse Pre-School towards the cost of volunteer training.

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

**24 GRANT APPLICATION - STRATHMORE FUN CLUB**

*Audio recording – Start of Item – 1 hour 40 minutes 35 seconds*

**RESOLVED:** That grant funding of £1,000 be awarded to Tilehouse Pre-School towards the cost of volunteer training.

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

**25 INFORMATION NOTE: SECTION 106 AND UNILATERAL UNDERTAKINGS**

*Audio recording – Start of Item – 1 hour 41 minutes 19 seconds*

The Committee received an Information Note entitled Section 106 and Unilateral Undertakings.

The following Members commented on the information note:

- Councillor Ian Albert;
- Councillor Richard Thake;
- Councillor Martin Stears-Handscomb;
- Councillor Clare Billing.

Members comments included:

- That officers needed to work closely with Councillors in order to identify where Section 106 funding could be spent;
- That there should be a process that details how Councillors would be involved;
- That the Authority had to be more pro active in agreeing Section 106 obligations;
- They noted that a large number of new dwellings have never made a contribution towards infrastructure or community projects;
- There was a need for better cycle routes in Hitchin.

## 26 WARD MATTERS AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS - MEMBERS' REPORTS

*Audio recording – Start of Item – 1 hour 48 minutes 21 seconds*

Members gave updates on the following:

- Hitchin United Charities (Councillor Richard Thake)
  - Proposed Redevelopment of John Barker Place (Councillor Martin Stears-Handscomb)
  - Walsworth Community Centre (Councillor Mike Hughson)
  - Green Issues (Councillor Sam Collins)
- It was proposed that a Hitchin sub-group to consider green issues to meet twice a year with the aim of all of the separate groups meeting together.

**RESOLVED:** That the Community Engagement Team Leader be requested to discuss with Members suitable community engagement events to bring together the various interest groups in Hitchin and to formulate information and ideas to feed into the new Cabinet Panel on the Environment.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To keep the Hitchin Committee apprised of ward matters and outside organisations.

## 27 ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AT FUTURE MEETINGS

*Audio recording – Start of Item – 2 hours 1 minute 30 seconds*

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

### Charnwood and other assets

Councillor Hoskins confirmed that this Committee could consider assets.

Members felt that the Council needed to take a view on how buildings were managed and needed to undertake an assessment of assets across the District. They felt that this Committee should be involved when assets became available..

### The Dell

The Committee talked a number of years ago about using the Dell more effectively and asked that a report brought to the Committee.

### Grant Funding Opportunities

The Committee considered that grant funding opportunities such as that mentioned by the Hitchin Market should be considered

### Any Further ideas

The Chairman requested that Members inform him or the Committee. Member and Scrutiny Manager of any other item for future agendas

The meeting closed at 9.40 pm

Chairman