

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

HITCHIN COMMITTEE

MEETING HELD IN THE CHRISTCHURCH HITCHIN
ON TUESDAY, 12TH OCTOBER, 2021 AT 7.30 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Councillor Ian Albert (Chair), Val Bryant, Paul Clark, Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, Simon Harwood, Keith Hoskins, Mike Hughson, Nigel Mason and Richard Thake*

In Attendance: *Danny Pearson (Assistant Community Engagement Officer), James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), Simon Ellis (Development and Conservation Manager) and Christopher Robson (Senior Estates Surveyor)*

Also Present: *At the commencement of the meeting approximately 11 members of the public, including registered speakers.*

4 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 1 minute

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Clare Billing, Judi Billing, Sam Collins and Kay Tart.

5 MINUTES - 2 MARCH 2021, 15 JUNE 2021, 8 JULY 2021

Audio Recording – 1 minute 25 seconds

Councillor Ian Albert as Chair proposed and Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 2 March 2021, 15 June 2021 and 8 July 2021 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

6 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 2 minutes 34 seconds

There was no other business notified.

7 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 2 minutes 40 seconds

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

- (3) The Chair 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.
- (4) The Chair announced that the Boundary Review Consultation survey was now available to complete and encouraged those present to complete it.

8 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - PEACE GARDEN SCULPTURE

Audio Recording – 34 minutes 10 seconds

Chris Kell, Chair of North Herts Interfaith Forum, gave a verbal presentation to update the Committee on the Peace Garden Sculpture and public fundraising, which included:

- Confirmation that the public fundraising had raised the required £8000 from 91 donors to release further grant funds. This was supported by an online fundraising campaign which attracted support from the wider Hitchin community.
- Peace Garden was now being used for private events, as well as faith groups.
- The next step would be to begin ground work to install the sculpture.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Keith Hoskins
- Councillor Nigel Mason

In response to questions, the Chair of North Herts Interfaith Forum advised:

- There was a desire to see this progress as soon as possible, especially to get the ground work dug before the winter months.
- The sculpture manufacturers had advised it would take 8 to 10 weeks to produce and delivery.
- Sculpture chosen is called 'Unity' and has been designed by two students at Hitchin Boys School and would be made by a professional sculptor in St Albans.
- The search for someone to complete groundwork was still ongoing and requested if Councillors had any contacts that these be passed on.

Councillor Paul Clark proposed and Councillor Richard Thake seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the remaining £2000 allocated to the project be released following the successful raising of funds from public contributions.

9 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - YOUNG PERSON UPDATE

Audio recording – 73 minutes 35 seconds

Flora Jolly, a Young Person from Hitchin, gave a verbal presentation to update the Committee on discussions held at the Cabinet Panel on Community on 30 September 2021. This included:

- The meeting was centred around the ideas and experiences of the young people there.
- Discussions were held around communication with young people, including word of mouth, social media and clubs to promote council activities, especially the Youth Council.
- Intergenerational events to develop better understanding of issues everyone is facing and bring people from different ages together around a shared interest.
- There was a desire to see an increase in less formal spaces for young people.

- Online communities have been built during the pandemic, but there was a need to continue this in person.
- Whilst there was a need to discuss mental health, it should not be the focus in every group as it was seen this may discourage people from attending.
- Generally the young people at the meeting just wanted a way of having their voices heard by the people who had the ability to make change happen.

Following the presentation, Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg thanked Flora for her presentation and commented:

- The young people at the meeting were highly engaged and were “stars of the show” with the discussions they had.
- There were issues highlighted which the council would need to understand and act on to improve relationship with young people in the district.
- Encouraged other Members to watch the recording of the Cabinet Panel on Community meeting.
- There was a view that youth services are currently seen as being for ‘problem children’ and questioned whether this was the best way to engage a wide range of young people.
- Had engaged on a project with Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation looking at improving services in Letchworth.

Councillor Ian Albert asked a question and commented:

- Prior to the pandemic there had been discussions at previous meetings about how better to engage with young people in Hitchin, but there was little engagement from young people at that stage. It was good to see their increasing involvement now.

In response to a question, Flora Jolly advised:

- Clubs were one of the best methods to engage with young people and works as those at clubs were already engaged.
- Schools are good, but it is difficult to understand which member of staff at a school was best placed to assist with this.
- Social media had a positive role, especially Instagram, but there was an importance to also offer in person messaging as people get back to normal following the pandemic.

10 HITCHIN BID MANAGER

Audio recording – 5 minutes 32 seconds

Tom Hardy, Hitchin BID Manager, thanked the Chair 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:

- Floral displays had been installed. These consisted of 25 wooden planters to replace social distancing barriers, which are currently centrally located but there were plans to move these in future.
- 30 winter planters around Town Centre.
- Christmas lights were being put up on October 27 2021 and testing will begin, but will not be lit until after Remembrance Day. New lights have been purchased for 2021 and further developments in Christmas lights are being looked at for 2022.
- Two new Rangers have joined the team part-time around the Town Centre.
- Rangers reports are given to Hitchin BID Manager on a Monday morning, which can be shared with Councillors.

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- The BID is currently halfway through its 5 year term and a midway review questionnaire has been produced to help to understand if the BID is working for its levy paying members. The questionnaire and the responses can be shared with Councillors if they wish.
- Spent time looking at the Welcome Back Fund with the Economic Development Officer and the Chair of Hitchin Area Committee.
- Focus more on Tourism Strategy for Hitchin. Currently there is a good understanding and practice of marketing events within the town, but less good at marketing the town on a wider basis. This would be the focus of a part-time employee looked at Hitchin as a tourist destination.
- It was being looked into whether funding was available to support this tourism development work and this could lead to a part time position for a new Events and Marketing Co-Ordinator.
- Analysis was taking place to look at which events are working, which are a bit tired and looking at new events which could take place in the Town.
- There was a meeting on 3 November 2021 at Sun Hotel, Hitchin to discuss possibilities for the Queens Platinum Jubilee long weekend.
- Christmas Tree light switch on would take place on 20 November 2021 and would be supported by a parade to be led by the 40-piece Herts Showband.
- Christmas Market and Santa's Grotto will be in place at the beginning of December in the Market Square, with 16 chalet stalls.
- In last 18 months, there have been 46 new businesses open, which brought vacancy rate to 3%.
- The Hawkins unit had been split into 4 units and 3 of these has been signed up with new tenants.
- Vacant units are being taken up quickly by new tenants and vacant units in town are usually due to the landlord not having received the keys back from previous tenants.
- Need to look further into developing an Industrial Area BID, which could benefit all the industrial sites, the town and population.
- Finger Signs need to be updated and corrected in the town centre.
- Churchgate lease is up for sale and several businesses on the site have been asking what the update and progression on this is.

In response to the presentation given by the Hitchin BID Manager, Councillor Ian Albert advised:

- Council was looking at making a bid for the lease at Churchgate and that the process was underway to develop a sound and financially viable business case for this.
- Consultation with Cabinet, and potentially Full Council, may be required for this.
- The deadline in 2 or 3 weeks will be met.

In response to the presentation given by the Hitchin BID Manager, Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg advised:

- Discussions had taken place with the NHDC Managing Director regarding a North Herts wide Tourism Strategy and the plans being developed by Hitchin BID could work alongside this.
- The Herts Growth Board, on which the Councillor was a political lead, was looking at regeneration of High Streets across the County and requested that the Hitchin BID Manager fed back their experience in Hitchin to contribute to this project and improve situation in the town, and across other towns in the district.

The following Members asked questions regarding the presentation given by Hitchin BID Manager:

- Councillor Richard Thake
- Councillor Paul Clark

- Councillor Simon Harwood
- Councillor Keith Hoskins

In response to questions, the Hitchin BID Manager advised:

- Hitchin BID takes a key operational role when filming takes place in the town and a proportion of the fee to be taken by the BID had been agreed with Commercial Team.
- District Council and BID would work together to promote the town as a filming location.
- There was a need when booking film crews to the town that this did not have a negative impact on business, as happened with Letchworth during previous filming.
- 18 businesses shut down in Hitchin over the last 18 months.
- Town Rangers work on a Friday and Saturday night from 10pm to 3am and so would not be ideal for looking at or dealing with any parking issues during the day, but do have a route which covers the entire town.
- Industrial Area BID would be a standalone bid, usually centring around marketing, commercial waste, etc.
- Has requested that district council carries out a feasibility study to look at whether the interest was there from businesses to sustain an Industrial BID.
- Repairs had been carried out the hut to be used as the Santa's Grotto.

In response to questions, Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg advised:

- Previously votes at Full Council on 7 February 2019 had carried the following motions:
 - That Full Council approve the principle of purchasing the leasehold interest for the Churchgate Shopping Centre, subject to further consideration of the economic case for doing so.
 - That Full Council agrees that any regeneration of Churchgate and the surrounding area must be a viable investment that maintains a return to the Council.
 - That officers are instructed to continue to consider a range of potential solutions in order to allow the flexibility needed to identify possible viable investments, subject to further Council decision in due course on the acceptability of any such solutions.

In response to questions, Councillor Keith Hoskins advised:

- Royston BID was almost entirely funded by the industrial area.
- It may be possible to develop a plan to set up a bus route from industrial sites to the Town Centre, to encourage people into town without having an increase in car traffic.
- University of Hertfordshire have offered to look into a tourism strategy, possibly for the whole county. This would offer an insight from a demographic not usually widely engaged with Council work.

11 INFORMATION NOTE AND GROUP DISCUSSION

Audio recording -

The Chair announced that:

RESOLVED: Due to the duration of the meeting, this Information Note would be discussed at the next Hitchin Area Committee.

12 GRANT APPLICATIONS AND COMMUNITY UPDATE

Audio Recording – 32 minutes 33 seconds and 142 minutes

Danny Pearson, Assistant Community Engagement Officer, presented the report entitled 'Grants and Community Update' and gave a verbal presentation, which included:

- £3465 was carried forward from 2020/21, of which £2000 was allocated to the Peace Sculpture and the remaining £1465 was granted to support Hitchin Festival.
- There was £11,000 available for 2021/22 and £720 had been used to make up the rest of the Hitchin Festival grant.
- Grant requests at this meeting amounted to £2230.
- A new staff member had joined the Community Engagement Team to assist with administrative tasks.
- Work continued engaging with Community Groups.
- Attempts to connect better with schools were still facing issues, with difficulties in identifying the best contact and remaining Covid restrictions on school visitors.

The following Member asked a question:

- Councillor Paul Clark

In response to questions, the Assistant Community Engagement Officer advised:

- There was a Remembrance Day service planned at St Mary's Church, however there was no parade planned for this year.

Councillor Ian Albert, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Keith Hoskins seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee endorse the actions taken by the Community Engagement team to promote greater community capacity and well-being for Hitchin.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

- (1) To ensure the Members are kept informed of the work of the Community Engagement Team.
- (2) This report is intended to inform Members of the financial resources available. It draws attention to the current budgetary situation by assisting in the effective financial management of budgets. This ensures that all actions are performed in line with the Authority's Financial Regulations, the Council's Constitution, and the guidance of the existing Grants policy as agreed by Cabinet in January 2020.

13 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio Recording – 41 minutes 40 seconds

A verbal presentation was given by Paul Dee from Hitchin Allotment Association regarding their grant application and included:

- The Association was taking a much wider social role, including setting up an outreach programme for young people which has become well attended.
- Working with Council to look at improving offers on allotment sites.
- There are large number of people involved in allotments, either directly or indirectly.
- There was a desire to act on the cost obstacle of taking on an allotment and this is where the Tool Loan Scheme came from.
- Tools can be expensive and this is prohibitive in people taking on an allotment and ensuring they stay on the allotment for a longer period.
- This would help to reduce admin costs for the council with frequently changing tenants and the scheme would pay for itself with 7 allotment holders staying.

- The tools will have a long life and will serve many allotment holders, with no ongoing costs for the Council.
- There is a view that allotments are more than just gardening and there is desire to see more volunteering, social opportunities and intergenerational working.

Councillor Richard Thake commented that this was a positive scheme and previous grants had a great impact.

Councillor Keith Hoskins commented that this was especially essential regarding mental wellbeing and advised that funding could be sought from Black Squirrel Credit Union.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Val Bryant
- Councillor Nigel Mason

In response to questions, Paul Dee advised:

- It was difficult to get an allotment in Hitchin and currently there were no vacancies.
- Previously there were vacancies and there was a waiting list, but this often caused delays in switching between tenants. Following a strong marketing campaign, all allotments were filled within a summer.
- Allotments now move onto a new tenant within 48 hours from advertising online.
- Still appetite for more allotments and it is truly thriving in Hitchin.
- There was a scheme being run at the moment where people can become co-workers on an allotment and these people are offered the chance to take on the allotment first before advertising.
- This is not a viable scheme for everyone with an allotment.
- There might be the possibility to look at local businesses to support the purchase of tools and some businesses in town already sponsor other schemes at the allotments.

14 GRANT APPLICATION - HITCHIN ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

Audio Recording – 56 minutes 20 seconds

Councillor Richard Thake proposed and Councillor Paul Clark seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That grant funding of £800 be awarded to Hitchin Allotment Association for the purchase of a tool store and tools that they can loan out to new allotment tenants as outlined in paragraph 8.1.2 of the officer's report.

15 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio Recording – 59 minutes 7 seconds

A verbal presentation was given by Aletheia Mashiri and Emma Clarke from Getting Rooted C.I.C regarding their grant application and included:

- The scheme was established to offer people the chance to do gardening but cannot take on an allotment themselves.
- Referred from various places, some from NHS, Job Centres, volunteer programmes.
- Those who work on the allotment contribute to the maintenance but also share the produce, which includes fruit and veg, as well as cut flowers. Some produce is also donated.

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- Social media has been employed to inform people how to grow produce and this became especially pertinent during lockdown where there was an increase in home gardening.
- Volunteer programme ran throughout the lockdown and people could come and maintain the allotment throughout.
- Funding would help to set up a new series of workshop in Spring 2022 and would help to buy equipment, but also subsidise the workshops to reduce financial factors prohibiting people.
- Have worked as a hub to support other community allotment projects through supply of seeds, tools, etc.

The following Member asked a question:

- Councillor Richard Thake

In response to questions, the Assistant Community Engagement Officer advised:

- The group had previously made a request for grant funding in 2021, but it had been agreed that the two requests were for different projects and therefore would be allowed.

16 GRANT APPLICATION - GETTING ROOTED C.I.C

Audio Recording – 65 minutes 53 seconds

Councillor Nigel Mason proposed and Councillor Simon Harwood seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That grant funding of £430 be awarded to Getting Rooted C.I.C. at 'Ron's Plot' Community Allotment Garden for the set up and running of new adult/ teen gardening workshops as outlined in paragraph 8.1.1 of the officer's report.

17 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio Recording – 66 minutes 40 seconds

A verbal presentation was given by Ian Bentley from Hitchin and Letchworth Sea Cadets regarding their grant application and included:

- Requested funds to purchase 10 laptops and a printer for use by Cadets to assist with the learning and online courses.
- Recently moved from a site in Hitchin to a site in Letchworth.
- Have set aside £700 from bag collections and other donations carried out themselves to support the purchase.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Richard Thake
- Councillor Paul Clark
- Councillor Simon Harwood

In response to questions, Ian Bentley advised:

- Application had been made to both Hitchin and Letchworth Committee.
- Currently limited to 30 Cadets, but this can usually run at 50 in a group and there is a waiting list to join Hitchin and Letchworth group.
- Should grant funds only be given from Hitchin Committee, there could be a reduction in laptops purchased to account for this.

- Site relocation was due to the lack of long lease being offered at the site in Hitchin and have now moved to a shared site with the Army Cadets in Letchworth.

In response to questions, the Assistant Community Engagement Officer advised that there would need to be advice sought to ensure funds could be released should the Letchworth Committee rejected and this would be circulated with Members as soon as it has been received.

18 GRANT APPLICATION - HITCHIN AND LETCHWORTH SEA CADETS

Audio Recording – 72 minutes 35 seconds

Councillor Simon Harwood proposed and Councillor Paul Clark seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That grant funding of £1,000 be awarded to Letchworth and Hitchin Sea Cadets for IT equipment to aid training for the cadets, camping and boating equipment, education and training events as outlined in paragraph 8.1.3 of the officer's report.

19 CHARNWOOD HOUSE UPDATE

Audio Recording – 86 minutes 43 seconds

Christopher Robson, Senior Estates Surveyor, presented the report entitled 'Charnwood House, Hitchin' and gave a verbal presentation to update the Committee on Charnwood House, which included:

- 180 survey responses had been received in response to the open days held at Charnwood House in early September and there were over 200 visitors across the two days.
- Many uses were suggested by individuals and organisations, but full analysis had not yet been completed.
- North Herts Council was aware of a covenant on the property, but believed there was sufficient scope to refurbish and develop the building for use as a community hub.
- Keen to promote and maintain the historic spirit of the building.
- Need to begin the marketing of the property and encourage all to make formal offers to see what is viable and within the restrictions of the covenant.
- Owing to the interest levels it was likely some people would be disappointed, but there was a desire to work across groups and individuals within the property.
- Keen not to avoid any further delay on the project.

Councillor Richard Thake commented that full commercial value would not be possible without going into marketing with the possibility that covenant protections would be overthrown. He did not believe this was the position of the Council at this time, but wished to highlight the difficulty in understanding the property's true value.

Following the presentation, the following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg
- Councillor Paul Clark

In response to questions asked, the Senior Estates Surveyor advised:

- If there was letting out with repairs to bring the property up to standard, there probably would not be a financial return.
- A bid had been submitted for finance to support refurbishments.

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- Was unaware of any issues with lead on the site, but would confirm this following the meeting and respond to Members directly.
- A condition survey was previously carried out by the Council and will be re-evaluated when there is an understanding of what is happening with the property.

The Chair invited Bernard Eddleston, Chair of the Charnwood House Community Management Association, to make a verbal presentation, which included:

- The Charnwood House Community Management Association had produced a condition survey, which was submitted to Council, in December 2020 and this included possible costs for refurbishment into a community hub.
- There were also detailed plans on conversion and a business plan submitted in confidence to the Council and the Association was happy for this to be shared with any bona fide community groups interested.
- Good to see the Open Days were successful and some analysis had taken place, but at this stage it was a summary and more detail was needed.
- There was a need to ensure that attractive commercial offers were not taken into account that would see the property turned into offices on the cheap and this would be against the covenants on the property.
- There was some possibility that commercial offices could be developed on the lower floor.
- Private events at the property would help to make the overall community hub viable.
- There would be no more submissions from the Association following their previous submitted documents and reports.
- No objection to the Council running the building, but this may affect ability to bring grant funding to the project.
- The current recommendation is too general and needed to stipulate that residential developments, demolition or commercial offices were not acceptable.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Richard Thake
- Councillor Simon Harwood

In response to questions, the Senior Estates Surveyor advised:

- When dealing with previous leases at Community Centres there were flexibilities written in the leases to support tenants in income generation, whilst maintaining the predominant use of the building as serving the community. Practical experience of securing an appropriate balance for such buildings between protecting their core community use and ensuring tenants can support themselves commercially is in place at North Herts Council
- Understood need to explore the potential option of developing Charnwood House and the adjoining library owned by the County Council as a joint project, not just Charnwood House in isolation. However, discussions with County Council will need to be factored in, inevitably prolonging the process in bringing Charnwood House back to full use.
- Marketing the property and doing an options appraisal would give realistic options.

Following the end of the discussion, the Chair confirmed that requesting an options appraisal was within the remit of the Committee and drew attention to an amendment to the motion as included on the Agenda.

Councillor Ian Albert as Chair proposed and Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Committee notes the outcome of the community engagement exercise.

- (2) That the Committee endorsed seeking Cabinet's authority to dispose of Charnwood House by way of lease of maximum 99 years, and seeking Cabinet's authority to market the property for leasing by informal tender, subject to Officers first undertaking an options appraisal for running Charnwood as a community hub, to include the option of North Herts Council running Charnwood in house.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

- (1) Noting the outcome of the community engagement exercise supports the Committee's role in coordinating interest in Charnwood House from parties within the public, private and voluntary sectors, in pursuit of repurposing the building to community hub use.
- (2) Approving seeking Cabinet's authority to dispose of and market Charnwood House for leasing will signify support to Officers to pursue these important next steps towards securing Charnwood's future use as a community hub. Undertaking the options appraisal first would determine the full range of choices to successfully deliver a community hub in Hitchin at Charnwood House.

20 SECTION 106 ANNUAL UPDATE

Audio Recording – 118 minutes 35 seconds

Simon Ellis, Planning Control and Conservation Manager, presented the report entitled 'Annual Update on Section 106 Obligations for Hitchin Committee' and gave a verbal presentation to update the Committee, which included:

- Infrastructure Funding Statements from December 2020 had been published detailed the Section 106 obligations in the district. The next statement would be published in December 2021.
- Two new agreements in Hitchin had been agreed in the last year, relating to North Herts College and John Barker Place.
- Would begin to look at bio-diversity net gain, where loss of diversity on sites would be offset at other council owned locations, and this would become more common as part of the Councils strategy.
- Quite a lot of outstanding Affordable Housing and Health funding.
- Not much to update as there have been very few developments of 10 or more agreed in the past year.
- New approach would look to share details of funding requests with Herts County Council at an earlier stage.
- Future reports will look at the Master Plan, negotiations and viability in the round, rather than reporting on diminishing funds.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Simon Harwood
- Councillor Paul Clark
- Councillor Mike Hughson

In response to questions, the Planning Control and Conservation Manager advised:

- Green Space Management Strategy would be looked at with the Greenspace – Manager to ensure some joined up work in the Master Plan.
- Information provided only applied to NHDC funding, whereas the funds from North Herts College was dealt with by Herts County Council.

In response to questions, Councillor Paul Clark advised that district discussions around an infrastructure levy were delayed as there was expectation that this would be done through a national scheme. However this had been delayed as details had to come from central government as expected.

Councillor Ian Albert, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Paul Clark seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Members note the content of this report.
- (2) That Members agree that a report shall continue to be presented on an annual basis to the Area Committee, which sets out full records of all Section 106 activity for the preceding financial year and which reflects changes in legislation and practice.
- (3) That, other than where a contribution has been negotiated for a specific purpose or project, Ward Members of the area where the Section 106 Obligation or Unilateral Undertaking funding is generated and the Area Committee be consulted prior to funding being allocated away from that area. Members must note that the discretionary funds are rapidly diminishing and will not be replaced under current legislation and practice, for reasons that are set out in this report.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) To ensure that there is a robust system for negotiating and managing Section 106 Obligations and Unilateral Undertakings, that records activity for each financial year and is placed in the public domain.
- (2) To ensure that the process is kept under constant review and Member scrutiny and that the risk associated with this activity is managed in an appropriate manner.

21 WARD MATTERS AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS - MEMBERS' REPORTS

Audio recording – 129 minutes 15 seconds

Councillor Keith Hoskins invited Glynn Doggett and Keith Warren to give a verbal presentation to update the Committee on The Dell and Hitchin Festival, which included:

- Costs for the events came to roughly £20,000 and income was roughly £28,000, with income still ongoing online through donation pages.
- The attendance for the events had been good, with over 12,000 visitors.
- Goodwill from suppliers helped to keep expenditure down.
- The desire to run a successful event was key to demonstrate the long-term possibilities on the site.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Ian Albert
- Councillor Simon Harwood

In response to questions, Glynn Doggett and Keith Warren advised:

- NHDC would be required to maintain the site, as currently it was essentially abandoned space which had meant the site was covered with glass and other rubbish.
- Fencing would need to be made secure, as existing gaps were allowing people to sneak onto the site.

In response to questions, Councillor Keith Hoskins advised:

- Maydencroft had been asked to look at concepts for further use of the site, but that they had been briefed this would need to be sympathetic to the original purpose of the site.
- Previous concerns regarding a covenant on the site had not been resolved, but this had been fed into the brief given to Maydencroft.

22 POSSIBLE AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Audio recording –

The following items were requested to be brought to future Committee meetings:

- The Dell to present the 5 Year Phasing Plan.
- Information Note entitled 'Unemployment, Furlough, Vacancies and Town Centre Activity in Hitchin', which was postponed from this meeting.
- Fair Trade initiatives in Hitchin.
- Update on renewal/sale of Churchgate lease.
- Update from Feed Up, Warm Up charity.

The Chair requested that, should any Members have any further suggestions for agenda items for future meetings, they advise himself, officers or the Committee Clerk.

Audio Recording of Meeting

The meeting closed at 10.01 pm

Chair