

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

HITCHIN COMMITTEE

**MEETING HELD IN THE WESTMILL COMMUNITY CENTRE, JOHN BARKER PLACE,
HITCHIN SG5 2PG
ON TUESDAY, 10TH MARCH, 2020 AT 7.30 PM**

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Ian Albert (Chair), Judi Billing, Val Bryant, Sam Collins, Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, Simon Harwood, Mike Hughson, Martin Stears-Handscomb and Richard Thake*

In Attendance: *Shayne Crowe (Environmental Protection and Housing Manager), Katie Staddon (Assistant Community Engagement Officer) and Matthew Hepburn (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer)*

Also Present: *At the commencement of the meeting approximately 10 members of the public.*

63 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio Recording – 20 Seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: Paul Clark, Keith Hoskins, Clare Billing and Kay Tart.

64 MINUTES - 14 JANUARY 2020

Audio Recording – 1 Minute 6 Seconds

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 14 January 2020 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

65 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio Recording – 1 Minute 25 Seconds

There was no other business notified.

66 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 1 Minute 28 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.

67 HERTFORDSHIRE CONSTABULARY

Audio Recording – 2 Minutes 40 Seconds

Sergeant Jon Vine, Hertfordshire Constabulary, provided Members of the Committee with an update on crime and police matters in the Hitchin area. The following information was provided:

Burglaries:

- Burglary reduction initiatives introduced;
- There were good results in tackling burglaries;
- There had been a reduction in rural burglaries;
- Victims of burglaries were visited and supported by Officers;

Speeding:

- 20mph limit had been introduced on Bearton Road;

Anti-Social Behaviour:

- Drug dealing had taken place at the Lairage Multi-Storey Car Park;
- There had been several arrests made in connection to Anti-Social Behaviour at the Lairage Multi-Storey car park;

Town Centre:

- There was no major concern with the night time economy;
- The police reported that Community Protection Notices had been issued to those committing the offence of begging;

Other Issues:

- County Lines were emerging. However, this was not currently an issue in Hitchin;
- Motor vehicle crime had increased particularly an increase in the theft of catalytic converters.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Judi Billing;
- Councillor Ian Albert;
- Councillor Simon Harwood;
- Councillor Val Bryant;
- Councillor Richard Thake; and
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg.

In response to questions raised by Members, Sergeant Jon Vine responded as follows:

- Better trained door staff and changes in drinking culture had improved the night time economy;
- Anti-Social Parking was an issue outside schools. The Police and North Hertfordshire District Council Enforcement Officers were working with schools to tackle this problem. However, schools needed to work with parents to resolve this issue as well as the Police had limited resources available to tackling parking issues outside schools;
- Ring door bells and internal cameras helped to protect homes from burglaries; and
- The right measures were in place to deal with Domestic Violence in a positive way and there were lots of resources put into the Domestic Violence Unit in Hatfield which Members could visit, if they so wished. He advised that this could be arranged via the Community Protection Manager at North Hertfordshire District Council.

The Chair, Councillor Ian Albert, thanked Sergeant Jon Vine for his presentation and for the work of Hertfordshire Constabulary.

68 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - FEED UP WARM UP

Audio Recording – 35 Minutes 14 Seconds

Mr Shane Cole thanked the Chair for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding their grant application, as follows:

- Feed Up Warm Up was now a registered charity;
- Sleep pods had been distributed across Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire;
- The sleep pods were positioned in areas with CCTV;
- Drop-ins to the service had increased by 70%;
- There were approximately 30-40 clients attending the service on a Wednesday;
- Owing to the increase in clients, resources were disappearing;
- The grant money requested at tonight's meeting would be used towards the cost of publicity materials and staff uniforms;
- There had been an increase in street homelessness;
- There had been an increase in female clients seeking help from Feed Up Warm Up, sometimes as a result of them fleeing domestic violence; and
- Extra funding would allow Feed up Warm Up to increase patrols, maintain their vehicles and train more volunteers in areas such as mental health awareness, safeguarding and self-defence.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Sam Collins; and
- Councillor Judi Billing.

In response to questions raised by Members, Mr Cole responded as follows:

- Volunteers currently required to pay for their uniform themselves; and
- Businesses have been approached to ask for help with uniform sponsorship.

Councillors Judi Billing and Richard Thake both advised Mr Cole that as Hertfordshire County Councillors, they have access to Locality Budgets that could also be used to help fund his project.

The Chair, Councillor Ian Albert, thanked Mr Cole for his presentation.

69 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - CLIMB HITCHIN

Audio Recording – 47 Minutes 50 Seconds

Ms Hannah Morgan-Gray and Mr Rob Findon thanked the Chair for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding their grant application as follows:

- Climb Hitchin was created as a result of the lack of climbing facilities in the local area and a demand for it;
- The club was open to the whole community in order to teach people the technical skills required to climb safely;
- The grant requested would be used to train 6 new volunteer climbing wall instructors; and
- At present, 90% of users were Hitchin residents.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Richard Thake;
- Councillor Judi Billing; and
- Councillor Val Bryant.

In response to questions raised by Members, Ms Morgan-Gray and Mr Findon responded as follows:

- There was capacity to hold additional sessions;
- Climb Hitchin was an adult-only club at present as teaching children carried a greater risk. However, offering family climbing sessions may be considered in the future;
- The youngest climber was aged 18 years old and the oldest was 76 years old; and
- The climb attracted a mix of people – half of the instructors were female.

The Chair, Councillor Ian Albert, thanked Ms Morgan-Gray and Mr Findon for their presentation.

70 HITCHIN BID MANAGER

Audio recording – 35 Minutes

There was no Hitchin BID update provided at that Committee as Mr Tom Hardy, Hitchin BID Manager, had sent his apologies for absence due to being unwell.

71 INFORMATION NOTE: PLANNING OBLIGATIONS

Audio Recording – 1 Hour 21 Minutes 54 Seconds

The Chair introduced the information note entitled Planning Obligations and advised Members that the report was for noting.

The following Members asked questions or commented:

- Councillor Sam Collins;
- Councillor Simon Harwood; and
- Councillor Richard Thake.

In response to questions and comments raised by Members, Councillor Ian Albert responded as follows:

- The information note had been requested at the Hitchin Committee in October 2019 when the Development and Conservation Manager attended to provide an annual update on S106 obligations; and
- The information note was intended to respond to the question relating to what s106 money had been allocated to Hitchin Town Hall and museum projects.

RESOLVED: That the information note entitled Planning Obligations be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To inform Members of all agreed S106 funds that were allocated to the Hitchin Town Hall project over recent years.

72 AIR QUALITY UPDATE

Audio Recording – 1 Hour 1 Minute 30 Seconds

The Environmental Protection and Housing Manager provided the Committee with an Air Quality Update, as follows:

- Defra required a report on an annual basis regarding air quality which would be submitted at the end of June;
- The results would be received in April and would need adjusting;
- NOx levels have reduced and not exceeded national air quality limits;
- The report results could be re-presented in September;
- The results would be published on the Environmental Health section of the North Hertfordshire District Council website;
- In order to improve air quality, work was being done with other local authorities and planning officers; and
- The air pollution alert system enabled people to sign up to receive a text or email alert when levels of air pollution increased;

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Sam Collins;
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg;
- Councillor Martin Stears-Handscomb;
- Councillor Simon Harwood;
- Councillor Richard Thake; and
- Councillor Ian Albert.

The Environmental Protection and Housing Manager responded to Members questions accordingly.

73 INFORMATION NOTE: NHDC TRANSPORT PROJECTS UPDATE

Audio Recording – 1 Hour 25 Minutes

The Chair introduced the information note entitled NHDC Transport Projects Update and lead a discussion on the Town Talk that had taken place prior to the Hitchin Committee which had been transport themed.

The following Members took part in discussions:

- Councillor Judi Billing;
- Councillor Sam Collins;
- Councillor Martin Stears-Handscorn;
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg;
- Councillor Simon Harwood; and
- Councillor Richard Thake.

Feedback provided by Members was as follows:

- Extending the town talk duration;
- Holding more themed/specialist town talks as well as maintaining the more general town talks;
- Ensuring members of the public were able to engage as much as possible and play an active role at the town talk; and
- The ability for the public to submit questions electronically before the town talk.

RESOLVED: That the information note entitled NHDC Transport Projects Update be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To provide Councillor's with an update on the current transport projects that the Council is currently involved with.

74 GRANTS & COMMUNITY UPDATE

Audio Recording – 1 Hour 36 Minutes

The Assistant Community Engagement Officer presented the Grants and Community Update report and advised the following:

- On 6 February 2020, a Westmill Network meeting took place with other agencies in order to facilitate a joint approach to combatting Anti-Social Behaviour around Westmill;
- Herts Sports Partnership were offering free football sessions every Thursday starting on 19 March 2020 at Westmill Community Centre from 7pm – 8pm;
- 'Waste not want less' event would be taking place on Saturday 4 April 2020 from 10am – 4pm at Hitchin Town Hall;
- There was a good response to the 'Have your say' events that took place on Friday 6 and Saturday 7 March 2020. Members of the public were asked questions around their hope and aspirations for the town, the Hitchin Market, transport and green spaces; and
- The Hitchin BID Manager would be putting forward a grant application for Hitchin Pride.

RESOLVED: That the actions taken by the Community Engagement officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being for Hitchin be endorsed.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

- (1) To ensure the Committee is kept informed of the work of the Community Engagement Team;
- (2) This report is intended to inform Members of the financial resources available to the Committee. It draws attention to the current budgetary situation by assisting in the effective financial management of the Area Committee's budget. 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 June 2016;
- (3) The awarding of financial assistance to voluntary organisations and the use of discretionary spending allows the Committee to further the aims of the Corporate Plan.

75 GRANT APPLICATION - FEED UP WARM UP

Audio recording – 1 Hour

RESOLVED: That grant funding of £676 be awarded to Feed Up Warm Up to assist with the cost of publicity materials and staff uniforms.

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

76 GRANT APPLICATION - CLIMB HITCHIN

Audio recording – 1 Hour

RESOLVED: That grant funding of £350 be awarded to Climb Hitchin to assist with the cost of training 6 new volunteer climbing wall instructors.

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

77 WARD MATTERS AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS - MEMBERS' REPORTS

Audio recording – 1 Hour 42 Minutes 35 Seconds

There were no ward matters.

78 POSSIBLE AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Audio recording – 1 Hour 43 Minutes

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

The meeting closed at 9.23 pm

Chair