

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

HITCHIN COMMITTEE

MEETING HELD IN THE WESTMILL COMMUNITY CENTRE, JOHN BARKER PLACE.
HITCHIN ON TUESDAY, 27TH JUNE, 2017 AT 7.30 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors Councillor Nicola Harris (Chairman), Councillor Ian Albert (Vice-Chairman), Judi Billing, Paul Clark, Elizabeth Dennis, Alan Millard, Frank Radcliffe, Ray Shakespeare-Smith and Richard Thake*

In Attendance:

Andy Godman (Head of Housing and Public Protection), Kate Voice, Claire Morgan (Communities Officer) and Hilary Dineen (Committee and Member Services Officer)

Also Present:

At the commencement of the meeting 15 members of the public.

4 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Simon Harwood, Bernard Lovewell, Adrian Smith and Martin Stears-Handscomb.

5 MINUTES - 7 MARCH 2017

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 7 March 2017 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

6 MINUTES - 18 MAY 2017

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 18 May 2017 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

7 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

No other business had been notified.

8 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (1) The Chairman thanked all who had attended Town Talk.
- (2) The Chairman welcomed all present, particularly those who had attended to give a presentation;
- (3) The Chairman asked the Committee to join her in thanking former Councillor Allison Ashley, who had decided to stand down as a Councillor, for all of her work in Hitchin and North Hertfordshire over many years as a Councillor.

Members unanimously agreed with the proposal;

- (4) The Chairman welcomed Councillor Ray Shakespeare-Smith back to the Committee;
- (5) The Chairman thanked Councillor Judi Billing for her Chairmanship of the Committee during the 2016/17 Civic Year;

- (6) The Chairman informed those present that, in accordance with Council policy, the meeting would be audio recorded;
- (7) 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.

RESOLVED: That former Councillor Allison Ashley be thanked for all of her work in Hitchin and North Hertfordshire over many years as a Councillor.

9 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - 8TH OUGHTON SCOUTS

Mrs Erica Lang thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee on behalf of the 8th Oughton Scouts and gave a verbal presentation regarding their activities.

Mrs Lang informed Members that they wished to say thank you for the grants received from the Hitchin Committee last year and to inform Members how the grant supported activities.

This Scout Group was fairly new, having been open for almost 4 years and was continuing to grow with many children coming from the Westmill area.

The grant helped the groups to buy lots of camping equipment including tents and cooking equipment, which had then enabled them to attend the District Activity Weekend in May 2017.

All of the Beavers, Cubs and Scouts attended the weekend and stayed under canvass, which for many of them was the first time they had been camping.

As a thank you, the children had put together a brochure describing their weekend, which was circulated to the Members.

Some of the children then informed Members what activities they did during the weekend and what they enjoyed including:

- The weekend was very exiting and inspirational;
- The activities were fun;
- Lots of people enjoyed roasting marshmallows;
- It was fun sleeping in the tent and waking up in the morning with damp clothes.

Mrs Lang informed Members that this was the first time that they had been to a District event and that it was good for the children to be able to mix with other groups around Hitchin, which had whetted their appetite to do more camping and attend more District events.

She concluded by reiterating her thanks for the grant funding, that had made such a huge difference to the children and to the leaders.

Members asked which camp site they visited on the District Wide Event

Mrs Lang advised that the District Wide Event took place at Bromham in Bedfordshire

Members commented that it was fantastic to get feedback from groups that had received funding.

A Member drew attention to the Scout Day that would be happening in Hitchin Town Centre on Saturday 1 July 2017 and encouraged everyone to attend with their children.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Lang for her presentation.

10 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - HITCHIN OUTDOOR POOL

Mr Charles Bunker thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding Hitchin Outdoor Pool.

Mr Bunker informed Members that he went swimming on a very busy day for the pool and was upset that approximately 40 percent of the pool was roped off and not able to be used.

Following this visit, he had posted an article regarding his experience on social media, which had received 693 engagements and 309 comments.

He hadn't realised the extent of the concerns regarding the pool until people stopped him in the Town Centre to comment on his article and some of the feedback had been about how, 50 years ago, the swimming pool had been a great social leveller.

There were four things that Hitchin was recognised for being, the Church, the market square, the view from Windmill Hill and the 80 year old Outdoor Pool that characterised the Town and at which he, had many years ago, spent a summer as a lifeguard.

Mr Bunker stated criticisms were not aimed at the staff, who worked extremely hard, but he was concerned that the pool was not being looked after by the management and gave the following examples of areas of concern:

- Dirty water in the pool that resulted in 40 percent being roped off as unusable;
- Dirty lavatories.

One of the reasons given for dirty water was sun cream, and he acknowledged that more people used sun cream as a matter of course than 50 years ago, but stated that if proper maintenance was carried out for instance care of filters and with the installation of modern technology, clean water was possible.

However there was a more basic problem that could help prevent dirty water in that the paths had not been swept for weeks and there was no longer a footbath to clean your feet before entering the pool,

He expressed concern regarding the change in the Health and Safety culture that had resulted in removal of the diving boards and the prevention of lilos and balls in the pool which meant there was nothing for children to play with in the pool and it was no longer fun.

There used to be a large area of grass for children to play on whilst not swimming and this had been gradually reduced over time and there was now no direct access from the grass to the pool. Mr Bunker suggested that a small piece of Butts Close be integrated into the swimming pool to enable swimmers to play games on.

Members re-iterated that the increased use of sun cream did indeed have an effect on the visibility of the water and therefore the safety when swimming.

They advised that the Manager of the pool was more than happy to have a users forum meeting and reminded people that, in the past, the pool used to close for two hours to enable cleaning to take place and that patrons had to pay again to use it in the afternoon, whereas it currently remained open all day.

In respect of Mr Bunker's comments regarding children not having fun at the pool, Members refuted this and commented that the children who used the pool did have a lot of fun.

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Members acknowledged that there may be improvements that could be made, but also noted that usage rates was weather dependent and that when the sun went in the pool usage reduced dramatically.

They commented that Health and Safety was vital and should not be dismissed and noted that no complaints had been made to the Council regarding these issues.

The Chairman thanked Mr Bunker for his presentation.

11 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - ST FAITHS CHURCH SMALL TALK CARER AND TODDLER PROJECT

Prior to consideration of the item Councillor Alan Millard declared a declarable interest as his grandchildren enjoyed attending St Faiths. He advised that, as this was not a pecuniary interest, he would remain in the room during the presentation and any debate and would take part in any vote.

Rev Melanie Crowley and Ms Mary Goose, St Faiths Church, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding their Small Talk Carer and Toddler Group grant application as follows:

Small Talk was a group for pre-school children and their carers that had been running for approximately two years and was open on Thursday mornings during term time.

The aims of the group were strictly non-educational but rather sought to provide a space where children and their carers could be happy, where the children could play the carers have a cup of coffee and both could form new friendships.

The laid back atmosphere and the choice of toys and crafts that weren't loud and competitive had made it a very attractive group.

Mrs Goose informed Members that, although the group was held in St Faiths it was a completely non-religious group.

Activities included play, crafts and singing, but some of the current toys and equipment, which had been donated, were in need of replacement, particularly the very old wooden chairs.

The aim was to purchase brightly coloured plastic chairs in different sizes, make more of the baby area with a couple of new rugs and buy more toys such as jigsaws.

Members asked whether they had any of their own funds to put towards these purchases.

Mrs Goose advised that they charged each family a small amount each week that was used for running costs and therefore they did not have any savings to use.

St Faiths contributed to the group by providing the room, heat, light etc at no charge and any monies collected were paid to St Faiths towards heating costs.

The Chairman thanked Rev Crowley and Mrs Goose for their presentation.

12 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - HITCHIN SENIOR CITIZENS

Prior to consideration of the item Councillor Richard Thake declared a declarable interest as he was the Council's representative on Hitchin Senior Citizens. He advised that, as this was not a pecuniary interest, he would remain in the room during the presentation and any debate and would take part in any vote.

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Prior to consideration of the item Councillor Alan Millard declared a declarable interest as he was a member of Hitchin Senior Citizens. He advised that, as this was not a pecuniary interest, he would remain in the room during the presentation and any debate and would take part in any vote.

Mrs Mick Furr MBE, Hitchin Senior Citizens, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding their grant application.

Mrs Furr informed Members that Hitchin Senior Citizens was formed in the 1950s and that she had been involved with them for about 40 years.

In the early days there were about 15 groups catering for older people, over the years people socialised less and less and the groups reduced.

Last year the running costs amounted to £3,600 with the grant of £2,600 from this Committee in 2016/17 covering room hire, transport and insurance costs.

When Bancroft Hall closed they moved to Westmill Community Centre and now have a membership of 70 – 80 people who enjoy a Lunch Club, a Strength and Stability Exercise Group and support with transport through Helping Hands.

This year they were asking for £2,000 as they had sufficient other funds to cover the rest of the costs for the current year.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Furr for her presentation.

13 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - FAMILY MATTRES

Prior to consideration of the item Councillor Richard Thake declared a declarable interest as the person representing this organisation at the meeting was a long term family friend. He advised that this would not affect his ability to determine the application for grant funding and therefore he would remain in the room for the presentation and any debate and would take part in the vote.

Ms Charmaine Rogers, Family Matters, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding their grant application.

Ms Rogers informed Members that she ran Family Matters met at the Children's Centre on Friday mornings throughout the year.

The group was started, with the support and encouragement of several Councillors, following Homestart losing their funding and had been very successful

Family Matters was about encouraging and enabling parents, who did not traditionally access mainstream services and confidence building and structure for the children.

Referrals were taken from the Children's Centre, Health Care Visitors, GPs and Children's Services.

During term time parents attended with their children, aged under five, and this continued during the school holidays, which could be an expensive time for parents.

Parents were likely to be on a low income and may not have received parenting examples or advice. They may be struggling with several young children and may be a single parent. Each family were asked for a contribution of £1 per week.

It was important that parents accompanied their children in order to learn parenting skills and about healthy eating.

Every week the group supported parents and children with arts and craft, cookery and other indoor activities as well as trips outside for picnics and to go swimming.

Members asked for clarification regarding the total cost of the project.

Ms Rogers advised that the project cost was approximately £820.

The Chairman thanked Ms Rogers for her presentation.

14 GRANTS AND COMMUNITY UPDATE

The Communities Officer presented the report of the Strategic Director of Finance, Policy and Governance entitled Grants and Community Update and drew attention to the following:

Budgets

The amount of unallocated funds available in the 2017/18 Discretionary Budget was £19,600, there was a further £15,300 carried forward from the 2016/17 Civic Year.

Any grants awarded would be allocated from the 2016/17 carry forward amount until it was depleted, at which point the 2017/18 funds would be utilised.

Grants Policy

Members commented on the effects of the revised grants policy and the creative steps that Area Committees had to take to ensure that groups received sufficient funding to continue operating during the years when they were ineligible to apply for grant funding

RESOLVED:

- (1) That all grants be allocated from the 2016/17 carry over amount of £15,300, until it is depleted;
- (2) That the budgetary expenditure, balances and carry forwards from the Development Ward Budgets as set out in Appendix A – Hitchin Area Committee budget for 2017/18 be noted;
- (3) That the Committee endorses the actions taken by the Community Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being for Hitchin;

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

15 GRANT APPLICATION - HITCHIN SENIOR CITIZENS

Prior to consideration of the item Councillor Richard Thake declared a declarable interest as he was the Council's representative on Hitchin Senior Citizens. He advised that, as this was not a pecuniary interest, he would remain in the room during the presentation and any debate and would take part in any vote.

Prior to consideration of the item Councillor Alan Millard declared a declarable interest as he was a member of Hitchin Senior Citizens. He advised that, as this was not a pecuniary interest, he would remain in the room during the presentation and any debate and would take part in any vote.

The Communities Officer reminded Members that Hitchin Senior Citizens had received a grant in January 2016, but this was prior to implementation of the current Grants Policy and therefore did not prohibit them for applying for funding this year.

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Members acknowledged that, under the revised Grants Policy, groups were only able to apply for grant funding every two years and commented that Hitchin Senior Citizens would be unlikely to be able to continue operating without this source of funding.

They discussed that, to ensure the continuation of this valuable and appreciated group, consideration should be given to increasing the amount requested.

It was also suggested that Hitchin Senior Citizens be encouraged to apply to County Councillors for grant funding from their Locality Budget.

It was proposed and seconded that grant funding of £3,000 be awarded to Hitchin Senior Citizens

RESOLVED:

- (1) That grant funding of £3,000 be awarded to Hitchin Senior Citizens from the 2016/17 Discretionary Budget as funding towards the cost of venue hire for a two year period;
- (2) That the Communities Officer be requested to signpost this organisation to their County Councillors to consider funding from their Locality Budget.

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

16 GRANT APPLICATION - ST FAITHS SMALL TALK CARERS AND TODDLER GROUP

Prior to consideration of the item Councillor Alan Millard declared a declarable interest as his grandchildren enjoyed attending St Faiths. He advised that, as this was not a pecuniary interest, he would remain in the room during the presentation and any debate and would take part in any vote.

The Communities Officer informed Members that St Faith's had not made any request for grant funding since 2009.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That grant funding of 500 be awarded to St Faiths from the 2016/17 Budget as funding towards the cost of replacing old wooden furniture and the purchase of new toys for the Small Talk Carers and Toddlers Group;
- (2) That the Communities Officer be requested to signpost this organisation to their County Councillor to consider funding from their Locality Budget.

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

17 GRANT APPLICATION - FAMILY MATTERS

Prior to consideration of the item Councillor Richard Thake declared a declarable interest as the person representing this organization at the meeting was a long term family friend. He advised that this would not affect his ability to determine the application for grant funding and therefore he would remain in the room for the presentation, any debate and would take part in the vote.

The Communities Officer reminded Members that Family Matters had received grant funding within the last two years, but this was prior to implementation of the current Grants Policy and therefore did not prohibit them for applying for funding this year.

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Family Matters was a valuable group that supported disadvantaged families by providing education regarding parenting skills and how to enjoy being a parent.

Members acknowledged that this group would be unable to apply for further funding for a period of two years and discussed whether or not to increase the amount awarded to help ensure that the service continued.

It was also suggested that Hitchin Senior Citizens be encouraged to apply to County Councillors for grant funding from their Locality Budget.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That grant funding of £1.230 be awarded to Family Matters from the 2016/17 Discretionary Budget as funding towards the cost of a summer holiday programme for children aged up to 10 years for two years;
- (2) That the Communities Officer be requested to signpost this organisation to their County Councillor to consider funding from their Locality Budget.

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

18 HOMELESSNESS IN HITCHIN

The Head of Housing and Public Protection Service and the Housing Options Manager gave a verbal update regarding homelessness in Hitchin.

The Head of Housing and Public Protection informed Members that the Housing Team were aware that homelessness was increasing across Hertfordshire and that rough sleeping in Hitchin was also more frequent

The Housing Options Manager informed Members that they had recently commissioned the Haven to carry out a small project to ascertain the level and backgrounds of the rough sleepers across North Herts.

In Hitchin this project had identified 5 rough sleepers, most of whom were known to the night shelter with many having complex needs including drug and alcohol dependency and mental health issues which made them difficult to engage with.

The night shelter aimed to engage with the drop in service at Christ Church as well as with drug and alcohol support agencies.

In respect of the Housing Options Service, once a rough sleeper had been made known to the team, a team member would provide some outreach work and attempt to engage with that person to look at their options for housing whether it be private rented or short term hostel accommodation.

The Head of Housing and Public Protection Service advised that, in respect of the community safety issues, officers were liaising with Hertfordshire Constabulary regarding the proportionate use of enforcement powers.

They were also working on a joint working protocol with the Police to ensure that they deal with any criminality associated with a rough sleeper and that the Community Safety Team use their powers regarding anti-social behaviour where necessary.

He advised that a lot of hostels and shelters in Hertfordshire required complete abstinence but rough sleepers often found this difficult and therefore they were working with the Director of

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Public Health to commission separate accommodation for those who were unable to abstain in the short term.

Members acknowledged the work being undertaken in respect of rough sleepers, but expressed some concern about those who were living in doorways and refused to move, sometimes becoming threatening to residents.

The Council was empowered to serve Community Protection Notices where there was evidence to support their use.

Members asked how long the Community Protection Notices lasted and whether individuals could return once they had lapsed.

The Head of Housing and Public Protection Service stated that many of the issues raised were straight forward criminal offences, which the Police are empowered to act on. Where behavior causes fear and distress this would be dealt with by the Council, but the primary driver was to try to engage with the person and get them into accommodation so that they could access support services..

A Member commented that there was a large under spend in the budget set aside to accommodate people in bed and breakfast accommodation and queried whether this money could be used to tackle some of the homelessness issues.

The Head of Housing and Public Protection clarified that there was not a separate budget for bed and breakfast accommodation.

The Authority would be receiving additional funding associated with the implementation of Homeless Reduction Act 2017 when it would become a duty for Council's to deal with single people who were homeless.

Members were being offered briefing sessions on 4 July 2018 regarding the provisions of the Act and the funds that would be coming to the Authority. A report would be presented to Cabinet in September 2017 that would set out the proposals on how this money would be spent.

Members noted the comments regarding the difficulty in engaging with rough sleepers with alcohol and drug related problems and the difficulty caused by hostels expecting abstinence. It was suggested that a "wet" hostel was key to solving this problem and would be a significant step in helping not only rough sleepers, but the residents in the Town as well.

Members acknowledged the excellent work carried out by the housing and homelessness teams.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Housing and Public Protection Service and the Housing Options Manager for their presentation.

19 HITCHIN TOWN CENTRE MANAGER

Prior to the item being discussed Councillor Judi Billing declared a declarable interest as she was a Director of Hitchin Initiative, She advised that, as this was an information item without any decisions being made, she would remain in the room and take part in any discussions.

Prior to the item being discussed Councillor Nicola Harris declared a declarable interest as she was the NHDC representative on Hitchin Initiative, She advised that, as this was an information item without any decisions being made, she would remain in the room and take part in any discussions.

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Mr Keith Hoskins, Hitchin Town Centre 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:

Hitchin Festival

The Hitchin Festival was due to start on 1 July 2017 and programmes were available.

There had been a cancellation, but conversely an addition had been made to the programme, which was very varied with 43 events.

These events included:

- Scout it Out, with activities including a zip wire in the market place;
- The Girl Guides Vintage Tea Afternoon;
- St Mary's Craft Fair;
- Historic Town Walk;
- Summer Saxes;
- Independents Day;
- World Food and Music Day;
- And many more.

The Dell

There were six covenants covering the Dell and surrounding land.

In 1952 Hitchin Urban Council granted money to make the Dell an open air theatre as part of the Festival of Britain celebrations.

It ceased operation as it was not well used, but came back into operation from the early 1990s until approximately 1999.

The Queen Mother Theatre, Bancroft Players and local business were all keen to reinstate the open air theatre, which would be a nice attraction for the Town.

It was time to sit down together and get this project moving.

Planning Applications

There was a planning application to turn the toilet block in Portmill Lane into a coffee shop.

The new retail unit across the road was going to be a deli and coffee shop and surveys undertaken indicated that there was a need for covered cycle and motorcycle parking, which would be a better use of this building, situated next to a car park.

A Member commented that there had been a previous application for this site to be used as offices.

NHDC was obviously keen to market the toilet block, and Hitchin should be making the Planning Department aware of any project needs so that they could be incorporated into any Section 106 agreement.

Garage Block, Rear of Garrison Court

NHDC was offering the garage block at the rear of Garrison Court for sale.

This should be used for museum storage in order to free up Charnwood House for other uses.

Riverside Walk

Several years ago Hitchin Initiative offered funding to provide a bridge near Jill Grey Place across to the rear of the Sun Hotel in order to progress the completion of the Riverside Walk.

This money was still available and a way forward needed to be found.

Members were concerned at the delay and asked that officers be asked to email all Members of this Committee with an update on the current position and be asked to move this project forward.

Flagpole

There had been some discussion about relocating the flagpole, however officers had now decided that the flagpole was no longer fit for purpose.

It would be good to have a flagpole in Hitchin.

A Member confirmed that there was no impediment to this Committee allocating funding toward the cost of a flagpole and would ask fellow Members to support any application that was made for this. Despite this permission would still need to be sought for actually placing a flagpole.

British Legion

Mary Prowse, the British Legion collector would be retiring this year. She was well know in the town and had a large army of volunteers who, over a six week period last year, collected over £38,000 in Hitchin.

Mr Hoskins appealed for someone to take over this position so that Hitchin could continue to contribute to the Poppy Appeal,

Homelessness

It was acknowledged that there were some people who were excluded from night shelters due to drug and alcohol dependency.

It was however intimidating for people in the Town to be confronted by rough sleepers and being asked for money.

The Authority should consider implementing a Public Spaces Protection Order.

Hitchin BID Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of Hitchin BID would take place on 27 September 2017 and this meeting would act as the launch for the renewal ballot campaign, with the ballot due in January 2019 and would provide an exhibition on car parking options.

Town Centre

Economically the Town remained vibrant.

There were some empty units in Hermitage Road, however units in Bancroft were being filled.

The Chairman thanked Mr Hoskins for his presentation.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That a decision be made as to where a flagpole should be placed in Hitchin and permission be sought to do so, following which this Committee would consider a grant application for the costs of purchasing and raising a flagpole;
- (2) That this Committee consider what capital projects were required in the Town Centre and request that the Planning Department include them as part of any Section 106 agreement associated with planning applications made in the area'
- (3) That the Senior Estates Surveyor be requested to email all Members of this Committee with an update on the current position regarding the proposed bridge at Jill Gray Place and be asked to take whatever actions are required to move this project forward.

REASON FOR DECISION: To improve the services and infrastructure within Hitchin Town Centre.

20 NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE MUSEUM AND COMMUNITY FACILITY IN HITCHIN TOWN HALL

The Committee received an Information Note regarding the North Hertfordshire Museum and Community Facility at Hitchin Town Hall.

21 WARD MATTERS AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS - MEMBERS' REPORTS

Bench outside Hitchin Town Hall

Councillor Billing advised that there had been some requests to replace the bench outside of Hitchin Town Hall from residents of Elmside Court.

The initial response from officers had not been encouraging, with many reasons given as to why this should not be replaced, which she had challenged.

The Committee and Member Services Officer advised that she had since receive and email from the Contracts and Projects Manager stating that consideration was being given to placing a bench outside of Hitchin Town Hall, providing it was the right style of bench and that Hitchin Committee paid for the purchase and installation.

Once the style of bench had been ascertain and quotes received, the Contracts and Project Manager would liaise with the Communities Officer to bring an application for funding to this Committee,

Westmill Community Centre

Councillor Frank Radcliffe praised the work undertaken regarding the new Westmill Community Centre and reminded Members that the new floodlit Multi Use Games Area was now complete and was being managed by the Community Centre.

Update on Work regarding Play Areas

Councillor Ian Albert reminded Members that the Committee had, at the last meeting of this Committee resolved:

“That this Committee consider how it can take a leading role to keep play areas open and investigate whether they can express an interest in running some of the play areas within Hitchin; and

That Councillors Simon Harwood and Martin Stears-Handscomb be authorised to represent the Hitchin Committee when making enquires regarding all aspects related to the above.”

Councillor Stears-Handscomb had provided a written summary of the work that he and Councillor Harwood had undertaken so far, which had previously been sent to Members and was available in hard copy this evening.

Councillors Harwood and Stears-Handscomb would give a further update at the next meeting of this Committee.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis informed Members that, one of the play areas due for closure was Rosehill in Walsworth.

Many members of the community were extremely unhappy at the potential loss of this play area and had been evidence gathering to support a demand that this particular play area remain open.

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She advised that she would provide a further update regarding Rosehill and other play areas at the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED: That Councillors Harwood and Stears-Handscomb be requested to give a further update on the work undertaken regarding Play areas at the next meeting of this Committee, due to be held on 5 September 2017.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Hitchin Committee to consider ways in which it can support play areas in Hitchin.

22 ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AT FUTURE MEETINGS

No suggestions were made at this meeting, however the Chairman asked Members to email her with any topics.

The Chairman advised that she had invited Bim Afolami MP to the meeting of this Committee due to be held on 5 September 2017.

The Chairman asked Members if they wished to invite the County Councillors to the next meeting to discuss Highways and infrastructure.

Members noted that there had not yet been a Highways Liaison Meeting in this Civic Year. The meeting usually planned for May had been postponed due to the General Election, but a meeting was being arranged.

The meeting closed at 9.05 am

Chairman