

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

HITCHIN COMMITTEE

**MEETING HELD IN THE WESTMILL COMMUNITY CENTRE,
JOHN BARKER PLACE, HITCHIN SG5 2PG
ON TUESDAY, 1ST OCTOBER, 2019 AT 7.30 PM**

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors Ian Albert (Chairman), Clare Billing (Vice-Chairman), Judi Billing, Val Bryant, Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, Simon Harwood, Keith Hoskins, Mike Hughson, Kay Tart and Richard Thake*

In Attendance: *Simon Ellis (Development and Conservation Manager), Melanie Stimpson (Democratic Services Manager), Julie Williams (Electoral Service Manager), Claire Morgan (Community Engagement Team Leader), Katie Staddon (Assistant Community Engagement Officer), Lea Ellis (Assistant Community Engagement Officer), Hilary Dineen (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager) and Matthew Hepburn (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer)*

Also Present: *At the commencement of the meeting approximately 25 members of the public, including registered speakers.*

28 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 33 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Paul Clark, Martin Stears-Handscomb and Sam Collins.

29 MINUTES - 5 MARCH 2019

Audio Recording – 1 minute

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 5 March 2019 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

30 MINUTES - 18 JUNE 2019

Audio Recording – 1 minutes 14 seconds

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 18 June 2019 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

31 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 1 minute 33 seconds

There was no other business notified.

32 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 1 minute 38 seconds

- (1) The Chairman welcomed those present at the meeting, especially those who had attended to give a presentation;
- (2) The Chairman advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be audio recorded;
- (3) The Chairman drew attention to the item on the agenda front pages regarding Declarations of Interest and reminded Members that, in line with the Code of Conduct, any Declarations of Interest needed to be declared immediately prior to the item in question;
- (4) The Chairman welcomed Matthew Hepburn, Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer, who was a new member of the Committee Team.
- (5) The Chairman advised that he was amending the order of items on the agenda as follows:
 - (i) Item 6 - Hitchin BID Manager would be taken before Item 6 - Public Participation, as he had another appointment to attend;
 - (ii) Item 11 - Grants and Community Update would be taken immediately following Item 6 - Public Participation.

33 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - PLASTIC FREE HITCHIN

Audio recording – 13 minutes 40 seconds

Ms Anni Sander, Community Lead, Plastic Free Hitchin, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation as follows:

- Letchworth Garden City had reached the plastic free accreditation and Hitchin was working towards this accreditation;
- Accreditation required that:
 - The Local Authority support plastic free – NHDC were already well advanced in getting rid of single use plastic;
 - 12 businesses be plastic free,- Currently 15 were plastic free in Hitchin although there was a drive to continue to increase this number;
 - Community centres, schools, leisure centres and other community hubs be plastic free – this was being worked on;
- Guidelines, flyers and information kits were available for anyone who was interested in being plastic free;
- Plastic Free Events included:
 - A litter pick on 20 October 2019 whereby people could pick up litter whilst jogging;
 - The repair café on 17 November 2019 in Hackspace where volunteers mended items that would have otherwise been disposed of.

The following Members asked questions or entered into the debate:

- Councillor Judi Billing;
- Councillor Mike Hughson;
- Councillor Keith Hoskins.

In response to questions, Ms Sander advised that:

- They had reached out to Waste Aware Partnership to get help;
- Many councils, including North Herts District Council, offered real nappy schemes offering free real nappy packs. However, people needed help finding out about it.

The Chairman thanked Ms Sander for her presentation.

34 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - CLIMATE ACTION GROUP

Audio recording – 24 minutes 2 seconds

Ms Nicky Clark, Climate Action Group, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation as follows::

- The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report stated that global warming would only be able to be kept below 2 degrees centigrade;
- IPCC report highlighted the importance of education to enhance climate change literature;
- Air pollution killed 40,000 people in the UK in 2018;
- There were other health related illnesses connected to air pollution such as Dementia and Diabetes;
- The UK would not have enough water by 2050;
- The concrete plant would be a huge carbon rich project. It was not using the best equipment and would not be producing the best concrete
- Concrete production used 10 percent of the world's industrial water:
- HGVs make up 3.2 percent of vehicles, but produce 34 percent of NOX emissions;
- Another concrete plant was not needed.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Kay Tart;
- Councillor Simon Harwood;
- Councillor Val Bryant;
- Councillor Richard Thake;
- Councillor Ian Albert.

Members raised the following matters:

- North Herts District Council was following laws and frameworks set out by Central Government;

- A Cabinet Panel on the Environment was set up to look at the ways in which the Council would react to the Climate Change Emergency that had been declared;
- The local plan needed to look at how the community would operate and not focus entirely on houses;
- The next item for discussion at the Cabinet Panel on the Environment would be Planning and Transport.

The Chairman thanked Ms Clark for her presentation.

35 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - COMMERCIAL VEHICLE ACCESS TO HITCHIN TOWN CENTRE

Audio recording – 41 minutes 53 seconds

Mr Colin Dunham thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding commercial vehicle access to Hitchin Town Centre as follows:

- Making Hitchin Town Centre traffic free was concerning;
- Commercial vehicles had to drive through the town centre in order to carry out deliveries to businesses;
- The public needed to be asked what they thought about making Hitchin town centre traffic free;
- It would kill the town if Hitchin were to be traffic free.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Judi Billing;
- Councillor Richard Thake.

Members raised the following matters:

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- Market Place was traffic free at weekends and this had not killed the town;
- More people wanted the town to be traffic free;
- Being traffic free had improved safety in the town as well as helping to make Hitchin more green;
- Locking the gate to the High Street on a Saturday has worked well;
- No Authority would prevent deliveries being made to shops;
- Making Town Centres vehicle free for periods of time worked.

The Chairman thanked Mr Dunham for his presentation.

36 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - HITCHIN SENIOR CITIZENS WELFARE COMMITTEE

Audio recording – 47 minutes 15 seconds

Councillor Richard Thake declared a Declarable Interest in that he was the Council's representative on the Hitchin Senior Citizens' Welfare Committee. He advised that he would listen to the presentation but would take no part in the debate and vote regarding the grant application.

Mrs Joan Kirby, Hitchin Senior Citizens Welfare Committee, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding their application for grant funding as follows:

- Mrs Kirby gave the background of the association;
- The Friendship Club was the only remaining club that used Helping Hands busses;
- It was a lunch club with 30 members;
- Income was spent on rent and the transport to collect members;
- Membership fees would be increased next April;
- They were requesting a grant of £2,000.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Kirby for her presentation.

37 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - KEECH HOSPICE

Audio recording – 52 minutes 5 seconds

Ms Meg Davies, Keech Hospice, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding their application for grant funding as follows:

- Keech Hospice was a Children's Hospice for Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Milton Keynes;
- Keech Hospice was one of the few hospices that provided care for adults and children with terminal illnesses;
- The Hospice had cared for 374 children last year of which 50 percent were from Hertfordshire and 27 were from Hitchin;
- The Hospice supported people during their time of crisis offering day support and in house care;;
- Asked for funding to expand the 24hr telephone advice line so that patients and families were able to speak to a specialist nurse which was important outside office hours;
- Advice line was able to offer medical advice, emotional support and helped to reduce hospital admissions;
- The advice line was also available to offer advice to other health care professionals
- They were currently only reaching 1 in 3 children that require hospice care in Hertfordshire;
- Keech Hospice was a charity that received just 30 percent of its funding from statutory sources;
- Keech Hospice was reliant on donations as £6 million was needed to be raised every year.

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

- Councillor Richard Thake;
- Councillor Kay Tart;
- Councillor Judi Billing.

In response to questions raised, Ms Meg Davies advised that:

- They needed to raise more awareness in order reach children not yet receiving care;
- They had applied for funding from County Councillors.

The Chairman thanked Ms Davies for her presentation.

38 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - RAVIDASSIA COMMUNITY CENTRE

Audio recording – 1 hour 3 minutes 42 seconds

Mr Vijai Mehar, Ravidassa Community Centre, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding their application for grant funding as follows:

- The centre was created in 1996; There had been a lack of volunteers and funding which had impacted upon their presence in the community in recent years;
- In November 2018 they decided to be more active and started renting out space to gain an income;
- They wanted to offer cooking classes for adults and children but needed to upgrade the kitchen
- Grant funding was requested to pay for some new kitchen equipment.

The Chairman thanked Mr Mehar for his presentation.

39 HITCHIN BID MANAGER

Audio recording – 3 minutes 25 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:

- At the Food Festival 50 percent of the stalls were Hitchin businesses;
- The first Bancroft Day took place which celebrated the 260 businesses along Bancroft;
- Churchyard Late (late night shopping) would take place in December, Street days would continue in 2020;
- Suggested events for the future included Hitchin Pride and a Soapbox Derby
- Anyone with ideas of any events that would help businesses should contact the Hitchin BID Manager;
- Businesses would be given the opportunity to have Christmas lights on their premises;
- They had taken on the North Herts District Council Christmas Tree and had chosen a 9 metre tree;
- Councillor Ian Albert had paid for new Christmas tree lights in memory of his wife;
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- 460 kg of coffee grounds had been recycled into more than 2100 coffee logs and these were on sale in the Information Centre, Brookers and Chilli B's.
- There was a new front of house staff member on a Saturday;
- They had been working with Lady Dixon and the District Council on a new water fountain. Work would be carried out by a local firm and would start on 14 October 2019 and last approximately 1 week;
- Judging took place regarding the Great British High Street Awards on 10 September 2019 and voting would close on 7 October 2019. A decision would be made in November 2019;
- A tourism strategy was being developed in order to promote Hitchin as a destination;
- There was an update given on the commercial units in Hitchin.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Kay Tart.

The Hitchin BID Manager confirmed that the Christmas lights switch on event would be held, on Saturday 13 November 2019 at 6pm.

The Chairman thanked Mr Hardy for his presentation.

40 PRESENTATION FROM SETTLE REGARDING THE RE-DEVELOPMENT OF JOHN BARKER PLACE

Audio Recording – 1 hour 11 minutes 12 seconds

NB: Councillor Judi Billing left at 20.48.

Ms Penny Metcalf, Development Director settle, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a PowerPoint presentation regarding the re-development of John Barker Place.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Kay Tart;
- Councillor Ian Albert;
- Councillor Claire Billing;
- Councillor Richard Thake.

In response to questions raised, Ms Metcalf advised:

- They were keen to access any additional platforms that would enable them to engage with people;
- Renewable energy such as solar panels would be on properties;
- Consideration was being given to where playspace would be located;
- Adult fitness areas could be difficult due to space, but they were open to suggestions;
- They would consider holding an event for residents where a discussion could be held;

- They were working with the community regarding a replacement for the Coffee Mill. Build based services were not the only solution;
- Help would be given through statutory payments and help with the physical process;
- Fuller details had been given to those people being moved and these details could be supplied to Councillors;
- Colleagues were interacting with residents on a daily basis.

The Chairman thanked Ms Metcalf for her presentation.

41 REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES AND POLLING STATIONS

Audio Recording – 1 hour 38 minutes 38 seconds

The Democratic Services Manager and the Electoral Services Manager presented the report entitled Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations and drew attention to the following:

- It was a legal requirement for the Council to conduct a full review every 5 years of UK Parliamentary Polling Districts and Polling Places.
- The current review must conclude by 31 January 2020;
- Appendix A identified the polling districts, polling places and polling stations for the entire District, along with justification for any proposed changes. .
- Appendix B gave details of the consultation responses, of the which 6 were in relation to Hitchin;
- Four expressed support for the proposals and 2 offered comments.

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

- Councillor Ian Albert;
- Councillor Simon Harwood;
- Councillor Richard Thake.

In response to questions the Democratic Services Manager advised that:

- Some information had been received regarding a boundary review, although no date had yet been advised;
- The Head of Whitehill School had been consulted and confirmed that he programmed the school's use as a polling station into their schedule.

The Electoral Services Manager advised that:

- Highbury Community Centre was too small to accommodate 3 polling stations;
- Schools could be commandeered for use as a polling station, but were unable to require closure of the school.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Polling Places, as illustrated in the Returning Officer's Proposals set out in Appendices A and C be designated;
- (2) That the Returning Officer be requested to keep the Polling Place and Stations at Whitehill School under review.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced a change to the timing of compulsory reviews of UK Parliamentary Polling Districts and Polling Places. The compulsory review must commence and conclude between 1 October 2018 and 31 January 2020 (inclusive).

42 ANNUAL UPDATE ON S106 OBLIGATIONS FOR HITCHIN COMMITTEE

Audio recording – 1 hour 51 minutes 6 seconds

The Development and Conservation Manager presented the report entitled Annual Update on S106 Obligations for Hitchin Committee. He provided the following updates to his report:

- Paragraph 15.1, Appendix 1, should be deleted;
- Paragraph 15.2 should read Appendix 1;
- Paragraph 11.1, Risk Implications, should read 'Cabinet in July 2013'.

The Development and Conservation Manager drew attention to the following:

- Tables 1, 1a and 2 of the report;
- The discretionary funds were diminishing;
- Consideration was being given to changing the way that consultation was undertaken with Parish and Ward Councillors;
- Cabinet would, in December 2019, consider a draft Supplementary Planning Document to update the business case for the introduction of a small sites Community Infrastructure Levy to start in 2020;

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

- Councillor Val Bryant;
- Councillor Richard Thake;
- Councillor Simon Harwood;
- Councillor Ian Albert.

In response to questions, the Development and Conservation Manager advised:

- Hertfordshire County Council were responsible for S106 contributions towards schools;
- S106 was a long term document and it could take some time before money spent after funding was received;

- The main purpose of s106 contributions was to mitigate a development and traffic regulations was a legitimate use of the funds;
- There was a diminishing amount of money remaining in the discretionary funds;
- Projects now had to be identified at the time the Section 106 agreement was negotiated.

Members expressed concern at the previous allocation of Section 106 funding for Hitchin to the Hitchin Town Hall and District Museum.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the content of the report entitled Annual Report on S106 Obligations for Hitchin Committee be noted;
- (2) That the Development and Conservation Manager be requested to present a report regarding Section 106 contributions to the Hitchin Committee on an annual basis;
- (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 Hitchin Committee be consulted prior to funding being allocated away from that area;
- (4) That it be noted that the discretionary funds are rapidly diminishing and will not be replaced under current legislation and practice, for reasons that are set out in the report entitled Annual Update on S106 Obligations for Hitchin Committee;
- (5) That the Community Engagement Team Leader be requested to maintain a “wish list” of projects for the Hitchin area that can be used for the negotiation of Section 106 contributions and that this list be reported in future Grant and Community Update reports;
- (6) That the Development and Conservation Manager be requested to investigate how large sums of Section 106 funding allocated to Hitchin was spent on the Hitchin Town Hall and District Museum and report the findings to all Members of this Committee.

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.

43 GRANTS & COMMUNITY UPDATE

Audio Recording – 1 hour 5 minutes 45 seconds

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

- There was £7,531 available in the budget;
- The grant funding applications being considered at this meeting totalled £4,840;
- If the Committee were minded to award all of the grants it would leave £2,691 for the next two Hitchin Committee meetings scheduled in December and March.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That £3,658 carried forward from 2018/19 and previously allocated to signage at Woodside Car Park, be reallocated to the general development budget;
- (2) That the actions taken by the Community Engagement officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being for Hitchin be endorsed.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) To ensure the Committee is kept informed of the work of the Community Engagement Team;
- (2) 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 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.

44 GRANT APPLICATION - HITCHIN SENIOR CITIZENS WELFARE COMMITTEE

Audio recording – 1 hour 8 minutes 5 seconds

Councillor Richard Thake had previously declared a Declarable Interest in that he was the Council's representative on the Hitchin Senior Citizens' Welfare Committee. He had advised that he would listen to the presentation but would take no part in the debate and vote regarding the grant application.

Councillor Mike Hughson declared a Declarable Interest in that he was the Council's representative on the Hitchin Senior Citizens' Welfare Committee. He advised that he would take no part in the debate and vote regarding the grant application.

RESOLVED: That grant funding of £2,434.13 be awarded from the discretionary budget to Hitchin Senior Citizens Welfare Committee to pay for transport costs for members.

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

45 GRANT APPLICATION - KEECH HOSPICE

Audio recording – 1 hour 9 minutes 10 seconds

RESOLVED: That grant funding of £1,500 be awarded from the discretionary budget to Keech Hospice towards the cost of the expansion of a 24hr telephone advice line.

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

46 GRANT APPLICATION - RAVIDASSIA COMMUNITY CENTRE

Audio recording – 1 hour 9 minutes 28 seconds

RESOLVED: That grant funding of £906.50 be awarded from the discretionary budget to Ravidassia Community Centre towards the cost of a new commercial cooker

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

47 WARD MATTERS AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS - MEMBERS' REPORTS

Audio recording – 2 hours 14 minutes 27 seconds

Members gave updates on the following issue:

King George V Playing Fields

Councillor Simon Harwood informed Members that:

- At least 8 groups representing 1,000 families used the facilities;
- There were issue in scheduling of works by County and District Councils, such as ensuring that grass cutting and line marking were completed in the right order;
- There were some issue regarding lighting;
- The facilities could be booked and rented;
- There were some significant issues that needed attention.

48 POSSIBLE AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Audio recording – 2 hours 19 minutes 39 seconds

RESOLVED: That the following be discussed at future meetings of this Committee:

3 December 2019:

- The Former Hitchin Museum building;
- The Dell.

10 March 2020:

- Air Quality.

To be scheduled for future meetings:

- Parking Strategy.

Tuesday, 1st October, 2019

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To keep the Hitchin Committee apprised of issues affecting the Hitchin area.

The meeting closed at 9.55 pm

Chairman