

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

HITCHIN COMMITTEE

**MEETING HELD IN THE LUCAS ROOM, HITCHIN TOWN HALL, BRAND STREET,
HITCHIN**

ON TUESDAY, 14TH JANUARY, 2020 AT 7.30 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Ian Albert (Chair), Councillor Clare Billing (Vice-Chair), Judi Billing, Val Bryant, Paul Clark, Sam Collins, Simon Harwood, Keith Hoskins, Martin Stears-Handscomb, Kay Tart and Richard Thake*

In Attendance: *Louise Symes (Strategic Infrastructure and Projects Manager), Claire Morgan (Community Engagement Team Leader), Marie Pritchett (Parking Projects Officer), Katie Staddon (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, Councillor Sam North and approximately 12 members of the public, including registered speakers.*

49 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 34 Seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg and Mike Hughson.

50 MINUTES - 1 OCTOBER 2019

Audio Recording – 45 Seconds

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 1 October 2019 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

51 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 1 Minute 20 Seconds

There was no other business notified.

52 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 1 Minute 25 Seconds

- (1) The Chairman welcomed those present at the meeting, especially those who had attended to give a presentation;
- (2) The Chairman and the Committee paid their respects to Alison Ashley, former North Hertfordshire District Council, who sadly passed away before Christmas.

She had served on the Hitchin Committee for 15 years and had been Chairman of the Council for the Civic Year 2008/2009;

- (3) The Chairman advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be audio recorded;
- (4) 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.

53 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - PURWELL SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

Audio Recording – 13 Minutes 56 Seconds

Before Ms Amanda Campbell-Phillips and Mr Mark Nash addressed the Committee in respect of their grant application, Councillor Kay Tart disclosed a Declarable Interest in that her children were pupils at Purwell School and she was the Marketing Officer for the PTA. She advised she would leave the room and not take part in the debate and vote.

Ms Amanda Campbell-Phillips and Mr Mark Nash provided the following information to the Committee:

- The swimming pool at the school was no longer in use and therefore the land was redundant;
- They were looking to turn this land into a learning and community garden, providing pupils with opportunities that they may not get at home;
- Two volunteer days had already taken place in order to prep the land;
- It was hoped that they could start growing easy crops such as runner beans, courgettes, tomatoes and pumpkins;
- It was the intention to sell excess produce to members of the local community;
- The aim was to involve local volunteers in order that they can share their knowledge and expertise with the pupils;
- Elderly people would be involved to enable them to pass on their gardening skills to pupils as well as helping to combat loneliness;
- The learning garden worked well with the new curriculum that had recently been introduced;
- There would be weekend access to the garden and the hope was to run a 'Learn about Gardening' club to teach people about how to grow basic crops;
- There was a vision to expand the garden in order to have a small orchard; and
- Parts of the land would be left to lie fallow to help with bio-diversity.

The following Members asked questions or made comment:

- Councillor Keith Hoskins;
- Councillor Judi Billing; and
- Councillor Sam Collins.

In response to a Member's question, Mr Nash stated that funding from other sources would be looked at and sought if required.

54 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - LIONS MIXED MARTIAL ARTS

Audio Recording – 26 Minutes 25 Seconds

The Committee received a verbal presentation from Mr Surtar Bachra and Mr Sanjeevan Theara regarding their grant application and advised the following:

- Two weekly classes took place - one on a Thursday for those aged 16+ and the other was on a Saturday for those aged 4-16;
- The grant was for the purchase of extra equipment, gloves, shin guards, body pads, boxing bags and boxing ring;
- The sum requested was £1,000;
- The objectives of the club were to keep children and adults active and to build children's confidence through mental and physical strength; and
- Ex-criminals were also encouraged to join to help the rehabilitation process.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Paul Clark;
- Councillor Judi Billing; and
- Councillor Richard Thake.

In response to questions raised, Mr Bachra and Mr Theara responded as follows:

- They had been self-funded;
- It was £5.00 per person to attend. However, this was not enforced in all cases;
- The classes contained a mixture of boys and girls;
- The split of boys and girls is around 60% to 40%;
- Attendees mainly came from Hitchin, Letchworth and near by villages;
- The majority of attendees were Sikh as the classes were based at the Sikh Centre; and
- Work was being done to increase publicity of the classes in order to attract a wider cross-section of attendees.

55 HITCHIN BID MANAGER

Audio recording – 4 Minutes

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

BID Update:

- There had been a good response to the Christmas Tree;
- Mr Hardy extended his thanks to Councillor Ian Albert for the new Christmas tree lights which had been donated by him in memory of his wife;
- The Christmas Tree for next Christmas was due to be chosen in February;
- The coffee grounds recycling scheme was going well with approximately 5 tonnes of used coffee already recycled;
- Sales of the coffee brisket logs were good and they were currently on sale in the Information Centre and other places throughout the town including Brookers and Hermitage Road restaurant;
- Teamed up with ReAssure to paint the bollards a dark blue; there was still lots of paint left. Local groups were going to be contacted to ask if they could help paint the bollards as well; Mr Hardy thanked Councillors Judi Billing and Derrick Ashley for paying for the paint;

- Chicken George, voted best fried chicken in the country and originally founded in Luton, was expanding to Hitchin and due to open in March 2020; and
- There was an aim to improve the Visitor Information Centre and a grant had been applied for in order to assist with this;

Events:

- The Hitchin Soap Box Derby would be taking place down Hermitage Road on Sunday 30 August 2020;
- The 2020 Events guide for the town would be realised soon;
- It was the Hertfordshire Year of Culture 2020 and they would be working with the Hitchin Festival Committee on implementing different events to reflect the year of culture;
- Hitchin Pride would be taking place on Saturday 25 July 2020. This would include a parade and stalls on Market Place;
- Street days had been very popular, and they would continue to take place. As well as introducing Sun Street Day; and
- The Beach Day would take place again on Market Place for two weeks.

Great British High Street Update:

- The Great British High Street Awards Ceremony was due to take place on Thursday 23 January 2020.

The following Members commented:

- Councillor Simon Harwood; and
- Councillor Keith Hoskins.

Councillor Keith Hoskins announced to the Committee that Hitchin Initiative was formed 25 years ago and its anniversary would be in March 2020.

56 NHDC PARKING STRATEGY DRAFT PARKING OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

Audio Recording – 43 Minutes

The Parking Projects Officer and the Strategic Infrastructure & Projects Manager presented the report entitled NHDC Parking Strategy Draft Parking Operational Guidelines and advised the following:

- The North Hertfordshire District Council Parking Strategy 2019-2031 was approved in January 2019;
- New opportunities to manage the parking stock across the District and generate additional income has been included in the draft Parking Operational Guidelines, which included;
 - Other Services in Council Car Parks;
 - Charging for On-Street Parking;
 - Employee Parking Schemes and;
 - Sale of Permits to Non-Residents in Controlled Parking Zones.
- The North Hertfordshire District Council Parking Operational Guidelines document should be read alongside the Parking Strategy;
- It was important that the Parking Operational Guidelines remained a living document in order to ensure it provided a flexible approach to emerging issues;
- The Parking Issues Reporting Pack allowed members of the public to report parking issues;
- The Reporting Pack sought to educate members of the public on parking related issues and different types of parking controls;

- Applicants must keep a log of parking issues over a four week period in order to allow for the severity to be assessed;
- 80% of residents must agree with the parking issue and;
- A similar reporting pack was in use at Hertfordshire County Council.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Judi Billing;
- Councillor Simon Harwood;
- Councillor Kay Tart;
- Councillor Paul Clark;
- Councillor Richard Thake;
- Councillor Martin Stears-Handscorn;
- Councillor Ian Albert;
- Councillor Sam Collins;
- Councillor Keith Hoskins; and
- Councillor Val Bryant.

Points and questions raised by Members were as follows:

- Ways in which the Parking Reporting Pack would be publicised to the public;
- Concerns over selling of non-resident permits;
- The importance of improving signage and traffic flows at the Lairage multi-storey;
- Concerns over cashless parking;
- Charging for parking at weekends, evenings and on Bank Holidays and the affect that this may have on the economy of the town;
- The time limit imposed on on-street parking and the possibility of increasing this especially on Hermitage Road;
- Implementing residential Electric-Vehicle charging points;
- What would happen after a member of public had reported a parking issue;
- The need to increase public transport services after a certain time especially in the evening;
- Concerns over the requirement to keep a log of the parking issue for four weeks;
- Fines should be proportionate to the parking offence;
- It was important that there was a district-wide consultation on the potential possibility of charging weekends, evenings and on Bank Holidays and;
- The Committee believed that a fundamental principle was ensuring that they helped local economic vibrancy and supported the night time economy.

In response to questions and points raised by Members, the Parking Projects Officer and the Strategic Infrastructure & Projects Manager provided the following:

- The relevant officers were looking at ways to communicate the Parking Reporting Pack to members of public;
- The aim of the Parking Reporting Pack was to empower the public in reporting parking issues;
- The take-up of permits within Controlled Parking Zones remained low;
- Controlled Parking Zones had been in place across the District for several years;
- Controlled Parking Zones worked well in areas situated near train stations or town centres;
- Withdrawing Controlled Parking Zones could lead to problems re-emerging that had previously been resolved by a CPZ;
- Changes to the charging period would require consultation with relevant stakeholders;

- Members of the public would like to see cashless parking;
- The document was flexible and allowed for amendments when necessary;
- The document could be simplified depending on the parking issue and its severity;
- There was a potential to make the parking reporting pack digital;
- Members could email the Parking Projects Officer with any comments they had in relation to the document.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Draft North Hertfordshire District Council Parking Operational Guidelines at Appendix A of the report be noted;
- (2) That the Draft North Hertfordshire District Council Parking Issues Reporting Pack 1 and Part 2 at Appendix B and C of the report be noted.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:

- (1) That the Draft North Hertfordshire District Council Parking Operational Guidelines at Appendix A be considered and adopted;
- (2) That the Draft North Hertfordshire District Council Parking Issues Reporting Pack 1 and Part 2 at Appendix B and C be considered and adopted;
- (3) That delegated authority be given to Service Director - Regulatory to approve minor amendments and format changes to the draft Parking Operational Guidelines as required in consultation with the Executive Member and Deputy for Planning and Transport;
- (4) That officers proceed with the work associated with the key projects listed in the Parking Strategy Strategic Action Plan using the Parking Operational Guidelines to implement the policy framework.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: The draft Parking Operational Guidelines will provide the necessary guidance and assessment criteria for the Parking Strategy policy framework for managing parking across the District in a most cost efficient way that accords with the Council's Corporate Objectives and its Medium Term Financial Strategy.

57 GRANTS & COMMUNITY UPDATE

Audio Recording - 1 Hour 39 Minutes 29 Seconds

Assistant Community Engagement Officer presented the report entitled Grants and Community Update and the Committee was advised as follows:

- Thus far, Hitchin Committee had provided £8,376 grant funding to organisations;
- There was £1,082 remaining for the next Hitchin Committee scheduled for March 2020;
- The Assistant Community Engagement Officer had discussed Charnwood House with the Interim Property Consultant and an update was provided; and
- In relation to the Resolutions in Minute 42 - item (5) of the Hitchin Committee Minutes of 1 October 2019, there was currently no Wishlist put together. Members were requested to send suggestions for the wish list to the Assistant Community Engagement Officer's inbox.

The following Members made comment:

Councillor Richard Thake; and
Councillor Paul Clark.

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.

58 GRANT APPLICATION - LIONS MIXED MARTIAL ARTS

Audio Recording – 36 Minutes 24 Seconds

RESOLVED: That grant funding of £1000 be awarded to Lions Mixed Martial Arts towards the cost of buying extra equipment such as; gloves, shin guards, body pads, boxing bags with fittings and a temporary boxing ring.

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

59 GRANT APPLICATION - PURWELL SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

Audio Recording – 36 Minutes 35 Seconds

RESOLVED: That grant funding of £600 be awarded to Purwell School Association to cover the costs of materials needed to create a learning garden.

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

60 COMMUNITY GRANTS POLICY REVIEW

Audio Recording – 1 Hour 49 Minutes

The Community Engagement Team Leader presented the report entitled Community Grants Policy Review and advised the following:

- The report outlined the proposed changes to the grants policy;
- The process had been simplified;
- The policy was last reviewed in 2016;
- Changes to the eligibility criteria were on page 90 of the report at paragraph 8.2.1;

- Organisations with charitable status, voluntary sector groups, community groups, Community Interest Companies, Community Interest Organisations, Schools, Academies, Business Improvement District Groups, Parish and Town Councils were now able to apply for grants;
- The 2016 Policy stated that applicants were ineligible for funding if they had other funding from NHDC within 2 years. This would no longer apply under the new policy;
- These changes would encourage a variety of organisations to apply and;
- The new criteria was similar to that of other local authorities.

Councillor Judi Billing, Executive Member for Community Engagement, informed the Committee that simplifying the Grants Policy was high-up on the work that both her and Councillor Ruth Brown, Deputy Executive Member for Community Engagement, wanted to achieve in order that people could get the funding needed for their organisation.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Sam Collins; and
- Councillor Richard Thake.

In response to questions raised, the Community Engagement Team Leader provided the following:

- The word 'projects' would be deleted from the table heading at paragraph 3.1 of the Community Grants Policy on page 105 of the report, to read 'ELIGIBLE for funding' and 'NOT ELIGIBLE for funding'; and
- The first item under NOT ELIGIBLE would be made clear that this relates to retrospective funding and not events that happen each year.

RESOLVED: That the proposed review of the Community Grants Policy and criteria be noted subject to the following amendment:

- The deletion of 'projects' from the table heading found at paragraph 3.1 of the Community Grants Policy on page 105 of the report, to read 'ELIGIBLE for funding' and 'NOT ELIGIBLE for funding';
- That the first item under NOT ELIGIBLE should be made clear that this relates to retrospective funding and not events that happen each year.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET: That the criteria and outline consultation process be approved.

REASON FOR DECISION: The awarding of grant funding awards to organisations, charities and voluntary groups, and the use of grant budgets devolved to Area Committees allows the Authority to further its aims and overarching Priorities of the Council and District.

61 WARD MATTERS AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS - MEMBERS' REPORTS

Audio recording – Audio Recording - 1 Hour 57 Minutes 20 Seconds

NB: Councillor Richard Thake left the Committee at 21:28

The Chairman lead a discussion on holding a follow-up meeting from the Churchgate Town talk on 5 September 2019 as well as the possibility of running a sub-surgery on a Friday and Saturday and school events.

With the Chairman's permission, Councillor Keith Hoskins gave the following update within the Grants and Community Update item:

The Committee received an update on the Dell. Councillor Hoskins informed Members that he had a meeting at the Dell with various stakeholders and there was an intention to hold a one-off event in July 2020 for that year's Hitchin Festival and Hertfordshire Year of Culture 2020. Councillor Hoskins further advised that Tom Hardy, Hitchin BID Manager, was in contact with an event management company who were due to provide a quote.

The following Members contributed to discussions:

- Councillor Paul Clark; and
- Councillor Kay Tart.

A Member suggested that ways to make the Churchgate project greener should be investigated.

RESOLVED: That a follow-up from the Churchgate Town Talk held in September 2019 be scheduled and put into the calendar of events.

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

62 POSSIBLE AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Audio Recording - 1 Hour 59 Minutes 50 Seconds

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

- Transport.

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

The meeting closed at 9.31 pm

Chair