

1 June 2007

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To: The Members of the Hitchin Committee of North Hertfordshire District Council:

Councillors: Judi Billing (Chairman), Deepak Sangha (Vice-Chairman), Mrs A.G. Ashley, David Billing, Clare Body, Paul Clark, Joan Kirby, Bernard Lovewell, Alan Millard, Lawrence Oliver, R. Shakespeare – Smith, Martin Stears, and R.A.C. Thake

You are invited to attend a meeting of the

HITCHIN COMMITTEE

to be held at

**THE BENSLOW MUSIC TRUST
BENSLOW LANE, HITCHIN**

on

TUESDAY, 12 JUNE 2007

at

7.30 p.m.

Yours sincerely,



David Miley
Democratic Services Manager

AGENDA - PART I

ITEM	PAGE
1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	-
2. MINUTES To take as read and approve as a true record the Minutes of the meeting of this Committee held on 17 April 2007.	-
3. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS Members should notify the Chairman of other business which they wish to be discussed by the Committee at the end of the business set out in the agenda. They must state the circumstances which they consider justify the business being considered as a matter of urgency. The Chairman will decide whether the item(s) raised will be considered.	-
4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST To receive from Members of the Committee any declarations of interest in respect of any business set out in the agenda. Members should either declare a prejudicial or personal interest and are required to notify the Chairman of the nature of any interest declared. Members declaring a prejudicial interest should leave the room and not seek to influence the decision on that particular item of business.	-
5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION To receive petitions, comments and questions from members of the public. 1. Cadwell Lane Residents' Association 2. Westmill Youth Community Project Public participation requests received within the agreed time will be notified to Members as soon as practicable.	1
6. HITCHIN TOWN HALL REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL SERVICES This report is 'to follow'.	3
7. HITCHIN COMMITTEE – THE WAY FORWARD REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES <i>For the Hitchin Committee to discuss inter alia: Committee meeting dates, venues, Hitchin Town Talk and Community Surgeries in the ensuing Civic Year.</i>	5

ITEM		PAGE
8.	CHAMPION NEWS REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL SERVICES <i>To advise the Hitchin Committee of the schemes and activities undertaken by the Community Development Officer since the last meeting held on 17 April 2007.</i>	9
9.	ANNUAL GRANTS, DEVELOPMENT, DISCRETIONARY AND VISIONING BUDGETS 2007– 2008 REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL SERVICES <i>To advise the Hitchin Committee of the current expenditure and balances within the delegated budgets.</i> <i>To consider four grant applications:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Hitchin Town Bowls Club2. Hitchin Town Centre Initiative3. 3rd Hitchin Scout Group4. Hitchin Christian Centre – Kool Kids Holiday Club.	13
10.	HITCHIN TOWN CENTRE MANAGER This presentation will be in an oral format.	21

INFORMATION NOTE

The following item has been prepared as an Information Note to all Members of the Hitchin Committee and is presented as a supporting volume to the main agenda.

This item will not be published with this agenda. Copies will be deposited at Hitchin, Letchworth, Baldock and Royston Libraries for public inspection.

ITEM

- A. HITCHIN COMMUNITY SURGERY – 5 MAY 2007** **1**
REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC
SERVICES

The dates for the meetings of the Hitchin Committee in the Civic Year 2007-2008 are to be determined at this meeting.

HITCHIN COMMITTEE

12 June, 2007

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

5

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The following presentations will be made to the Committee:

1. Cadwell Lane Residents' Association
2. Westmill Community Project

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**HITCHIN AREA COMMITTEE
12th JUNE 2007**

PART 1* PUBLIC DOCUMENT

AGENDA ITEM No.

6

TITLE OF REPORT: THE FUTURE OF HITCHIN TOWN HALL

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL SERVICES

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Hitchin Area Committee and Cabinet on the process that has been undertaken to determine options for the future of Hitchin Town Hall.
- 1.2 The focus of work to date has been to undertake a market testing process with a view to retain the Town Hall as a community facility with a third party management arrangement.
- 1.3 A further report which details the outcome of the market testing process will be prepared for Cabinet on 26th June for consideration on Part 2 of the agenda, as this will contain information of a commercially confidential nature.

2. FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan on 1st January 2006.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The policy context for the management of the Hitchin Town Hall was set out in the report that reviewed village halls and community centres in March 2005. This stated that in support of the Council's Strategic Objectives, the Council recognised that local community facilities have a key role to play in creating sustainable, vibrant communities. In particular the policy statements below reflect the Council's aspirations:

1. That, where appropriate, North Hertfordshire District Council aspires to move to the 'voluntary management' for all of our community centres, village halls and public halls.

2. That, where it has landlord responsibilities, the Council will maintain the fabric of its current stock of its facilities to meet all appropriate health, safety, access and public entertainment licensing requirements.

- 3.2 The Local Government and Public Health Bill, currently under Parliamentary scrutiny, contains proposals to facilitate local authorities to transfer, where appropriate, the ownership or management of public assets to community groups or other third party operators in order to optimize their potential for community well-being. The Quirk Review, Making Assets Work, endorses this approach.
- 3.3 The Council's Asset Management Strategy specifies the procedures to be adopted for the disposal of surplus and/or under used property.
- 3.4 A decision to transfer the Town Hall to a third party operator was made by Council at its meeting on 9th February, with the approval of the Budget Proposals for 2006/7, including savings £29,390 in 2006/7 and £58,780 thereafter. The description of the budget saving was:

"Transfer of Hitchin Town Hall to third party with no residual costs to the Council (direct costs only)".

This financial dimension is an underpinning rationale for the future management of the Town Hall.

- 3.5 Following an expression of interest in taking over the management of the Town Hall by the Hitchin Town Centre Initiative (HTCI) in September 2005, Cabinet, at its meeting on 28th March 2006, considered the outcomes of the negotiations with the HTCI and resolved:
- 1) That Cabinet note that the multi-strand approach to the future of the Hitchin Town Hall would be progressed along the lines set out in the report;
 - 2) That a further report to determine the most appropriate course of action to be taken would be brought to a future meeting of Cabinet.

- 3.6 The multi-strand approach that was agreed was as follows:

Maintaining Existing Use

1. Complete an outline needs analysis as to how best and to what use the Town Hall can be put. This will then help determine the options available.
2. Market test the potential for the Town Hall with other potential community organisations to see if they could provide a different solution to its future use.

Change Existing Use

3. Market test the potential for the Town Hall with a broader range of commercial operators, which may result in a different type of service/provision.
4. Consider the Town Hall as being surplus to the Council's requirements and therefore becoming an asset for disposal.

- 3.7 The opportunity to work in partnership with the HTCI could not be realised in terms acceptable to the Council. Since that time the Council has been working to secure alternative management arrangements in the provision of services and also the refurbishment of the premises, which, are in need of significant improvement.

- 3.8 It is worth noting that there is no national policy standard that indicates either the ratio or relationship between public halls such as the Hitchin Town Hall and the communities for which they provide.
- 3.9 While, the Council has no mandatory duty to provide a town hall or similar community facilities, it nevertheless has a duty to promote the social, environmental and economic well-being of its communities.

4. KEY ISSUES

Provision Analysis

- 4.1 A provision analysis of the halls and venues in Hitchin that invite community use was undertaken during 2006 (summarised in Appendices 1a and 1b). The purpose of the analysis was to evaluate the need for a venue like the Town Hall in terms of its function and capacity and whether there was already sufficient provision in the town to meet local demands.
- 4.2 This analysis identified the following key issues about the Town Hall:
- The Town Hall is the largest in size and capacity in Hitchin (up to 800 persons).
 - It offers a unique flexibility of space to provide for wide range of activities taking place at the same time, eg: dance/music, sports, general meetings.
 - It provides for 30,000 persons living within a two mile radius
 - It also provides for users from other parts of North Herts (there are no similar sized NHDC facilities) and from neighbouring districts
 - It has a number of key features which contribute to its uniqueness, eg: wooden sprung floor, balcony
 - Current usage of the Town Hall is only operating in core times at between 34% – 41% capacity, with a broad split between 70% community, and 30% private/commercial.
 - It is likely that some activities that currently take place at the Hall could not be relocated elsewhere.
 - The Town Hall has assumed a particular status, and there are aspirations, strongly felt within sections of the local community, that it adds a purpose and value to the spirit and atmosphere of Hitchin Town Centre.
- 4.3 The analysis also identified a range of different community buildings within the Hitchin urban area and that there is surplus capacity at these other venues, ie: that these also were not operating at full capacity. This suggests that taken together, there is an over-capacity of general community provision for hire, and that some rationalisation could take place.
- 4.4 While, therefore, this analysis does not provide absolute evidence that there is a clear objective need in spatial terms for the Town Hall, nevertheless, there is a strong community expectation and aspiration that the Town Hall should continue to be used for general community purposes, as it is the only building of its type in the town.

- 4.5 Such views have been supported by a desk top research of recent strategies, policies and surveys that have indicated a preference for its continuation as a multi-function community facility. However, this is, of course, a finely balanced argument and always subject to affordability. Hitchin Town Hall has been considered within this context.

Retention of Town Hall for Improved Community Use

- 4.6 The approach for the Town Hall in the first instance has been to develop its use as a refurbished community amenity operating with a dedicated transferred management arrangement – a combination of Options 1 and 2 above (paragraph 3.6).
- 4.7 This initial option has been ‘market tested’ in accordance with the Council’s Financial Regulations and Contract Procurement Rules with potential external operators to assess their ‘expressions of interest’ in taking on the management of some or all of the Town Hall site. The option to view started on January 26th 2007 and closed on February 26th.
- 4.8 A Programming and User Criteria had been developed (Appendix 2) which set out more specifically the scale and scope of community based facilities that should take place at the Town Hall. This formed part of the tender documentation.
- 4.9 In essence, operators were asked to submit their expressions of interest on the basis that the Town Hall as a multi-function facility would continue to provide the following community, cultural and leisure based activities:
- Public meeting space for small and large groups, e.g: weddings
 - Activity and sporting activities
 - Arts, culture and heritage
 - Children and young people’s activities
 - Band performance/live entertainments
 - Theatre/cinema
 - Bar and café/restaurant
 - Private hire
 - Commercial hire
 - Rehearsal space
- 4.10 The existing use of the building falls within Class D1 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987. If it was proposed to use the building entirely for just one of the various functions listed (theatre, cinema, restaurant) then a material change of use would be involved for which planning permission would be required.
- 4.11 The Town Hall is within the Hitchin Conservation Area where it has been identified as an important local building and one that contributes positively to the character of the Area so that it merits retention.
- 4.12 Government guidance and this identification indicate the need to ensure a use sympathetic to the building’s character. This would need to be considered if the building were to be made surplus to the Council’s requirements at any time in the future.

- 4.13 Six expressions of interest were received by the due closing date. Following an initial evaluation, all were given a further opportunity to review their bids and develop their business plans by April 30.
- 4.14 A cross-department officer team considered all expressions against the published tender specification criteria. At this stage of the process, three applicants were not shortlisted for interview.
- 4.15 Interviews for the remaining three applicants were held on 29th May and 4th June.
- 4.16 Following these interviews, it was evident that further documentary evidence was required, which, at the time of the drafting of this report, had not been supplied.

When this information is received, it will be examined prior to a specific report being prepared for Cabinet which will recommend the course of action to be taken. It is anticipated that any recommendation to award a lease to a third party operator will still be subject to detailed negotiations being satisfactorily concluded.

- 4.17 It is proposed that the transfer of management arrangements will be effective from 1st October 2007.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Town Hall complex comprises the Town Hall itself (site acquired 1899), and the adjoining Gymnasium (acquired 1934) and Workman's Hall (acquired 1969).
- 5.2 Originally, there were two separate statutory regimes governing the proposed 'disposal' of (1) the Town Hall itself and (2) the adjoining Gymnasium and Workman's Hall.
- 5.3 The Town Hall is subject to the requirement under Section 123 of the Local Government Act, 1972 that (with exceptions) 'disposal' should be for a consideration not less than the best consideration reasonably obtainable
- 5.4 The Gymnasium was registered with the Charity Commission as charitable trust (233752) in 1964.

When the Workman's Hall was conveyed to the Hitchin Urban District Council in 1969, it declared that it held this hall on the 1934 trusts.

In 2001, the Gymnasium charity was removed from the Charity Commissioners' Central Register of Charities which means that there is now no requirement to comply with the Charities Acts in any 'disposal' of the Gymnasium and Workman's Hall

- 5.5 There is a covenant (1899) to build a wall, but, as the Council now owns both sides, this is no longer relevant
- 5.6 In order to comply with the Council's Standing Orders/Financial Regulations, the market testing process has been undertaken. No 'disposal' shall be effected until a detailed report has been prepared by the Director of Financial and Regulatory Services and considered by Cabinet.

- 5.7 Contracts for external management must be tendered in accordance with Contracts Standing Orders and, following consultation with staff, include TUPE issues

6. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There is a continuing service interest in the use of the Town Hall for provision of community use, albeit by a third party operator.
- 6.2 Through the Service & Financial Planning process (£2005/6), the running costs of the Council managing this facility were approved as savings of £58,780 in 2007/8 and thereafter.
- 6.2 The Town Hall has a current re-build value of £3.7 million. With a restricted user licence, the market value of the lease is £200,000.
- 6.4 Any business case submitted by potential third party external operators should include an investment plan (to meet identified refurbishment repair costs) and sources of funding.

7. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 In the event of the Transfer of the Town Hall and its services, there will be 3.5 FTE posts affected. The Council's TUPE policy and practice will be implemented for individual and group consultation.

8. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

- 8.1 During the market testing process there was significant consultation with potential operators about the potential use to which the town hall could be put.
- 8.2 There has also been significant public interest in the future of the Town Hall during the past six months, with this matter being debated at Council of 29th March 2007.
- 8.3 The Hitchin Area Committee discussed the future of the Town Hall in January 2006, when it gave its support to the proposal submitted by the Hitchin Town Centre Initiative.
- 8.4 Cabinet has previously considered the Town Hall at its meetings on 31st January, 28th February and 28th March 2006.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 The Hitchin Area Committee is asked to note the report and forward any comments to Cabinet.

10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To achieve a qualified position on the future use of the Town Hall which meets the financial requirements of the Council and at the same time those of Hitchin Town Centre, local residents and existing users.

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Appendix 1a - Summary Comparison of Community Facilities in Hitchin
Appendix 1b - Hitchin Halls and Community Facilities – Categories
Appendix 2 – Programming and User Criteria

12. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 12.1 Patrick Candler, Head of Community Development and Cultural Services, ex 4823.
E-mail: patrick.candler@north-herts.gov.uk
- 12.2 Peter Underwood, Community Facilities Manager, 01438 365392. E-mail:
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- 12.3 Lois Stewart, Group Accountant, ext 4566. E-mail: lois.stewart@north-herts.gov.uk
- 12.4 Frances Bogie, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, ext 4560. E-mail:
frances.bogie@north-herts.gov.uk.
- 12.5 Barrie Jones, Head of Financial Services, ext 4254. E-mail: barrie.jones@north-herts.gov.uk.
- 12.6 Mabel Adjei-Barwuah, Estates Surveyor, ext 4320. Email: mabel.adjei-barwuah@north-herts.gov.uk.
- 12.7 Kerry Shorrocks, Head of Human Resources, ext 4224. E-mail: kerry.shorrocks@north-herts.gov.uk.

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 13.1 Reports to Cabinet on the Hitchin Town Hall in January 2006, February 2006 and March 2006.
- 13.2 Report to Cabinet on the Review of Voluntary Managed Community Centres and Village Halls, March 2005.
- 13.3 Hitchin Town Centre Strategy, November 2004.
- 13.4 NHDC Asset Management Strategy, December 2004
- 13.5 A Retail and Town Centre Study for North Hertfordshire, 2004 produced by Nathaniel Litchfield and Partners.
- 13.6 Report to Hitchin Area Committee in October 2003 on Area Visioning

APPENDIX 1a

SUMMARY COMPARISON OF COMMUNITY FACILITIES IN HITCHIN

As part of the investigation into the future use of Hitchin Town Hall, a desk top analysis was undertaken to establish the extent and nature of the community facilities within Hitchin, provided by a variety of private, public and voluntary sector sources, and to gain a view on level of usage of those facilities.

This analysis took the form of an audit of thirty five (35) community centres, halls, church halls, schools etc, all located within a 3000m radius of the Town Hall itself. Each facility was contacted and information gathered on its size, capacity, availability for hire, current hire groups, and where possible, an estimate of its current level of usage determined.

From the information obtained, the facilities were graded into four bands depending on the nature and extent of availability for use by the general public.

Hitchin Town Hall was graded as an A1, with others graded from A2 to D1 to reflect the nature and extent of the respective hire options / facilities available

The number of facilities and their relative grading descriptions are shown below.

A1	-	Hitchin Town Hall	1
A2	-	Urban Community Centres	5
B1	-	Less facilities available / capacity for hire than A2	11
C1	-	Less facilities available / capacity for hire than B1	10
D1	-	Specialist / Focussed Hire	8

From the survey, and where it was possible to make an assessment, it was estimated that the overall usage operating capacity of the facilities was 70 %.

A list of the facilities surveyed is attached as is a diagram showing their locations, in relation to Hitchin Town Hall.

APPENDIX 2

HITCHIN TOWN HALL – PROGRAMMING AND USER CRITERIA

General Considerations

- The Council wants to see an improved, balanced programme of activities/events taking place at the Town Hall that reflect its Strategic Objectives
- The Council considers that this programme of activities should reflect local needs in terms of age of users, gender and ethnicity. Consideration should also be given to optimising access for disabled users.
- The Council recognises that the any operator will need to develop a sustainable programme of activities that not only generate sufficient income, but cross-subsidise those community organisations that are less able to pay
- As a guideline 50% should be for general community use by bona-fide voluntary organisations and charities with 50% commercial/private between organisations or individuals.

NB: for Council purposes, a community organisation is one that operates on a not-for-profit basis or for charitable purposes and is governed by a community based management committee. It is feasible for a community organisation to engage in commercial activities but these must be for the general benefit of the organisation and local community.

A commercial/private hirer is one that operates for their own personal gain or for profit.

- Assuming a 10 hour 7 day use, the Council would therefore expect to see at least 35 hours given to community use.
- The Council will not be prescriptive about the balance between day time and evening allocations, nor in the specific rooms that may be given to different organisations.
- The Council accepts that any operator may be able to bring back into use rooms and space that are currently not or underused.
- The Council recognises that there are certain peak or highly popular times that may be requested by a range of groups. The Council would expect a fair allocation of such times so that no one group has exclusive use, eg: of the main hall.
- The Council requires programming to ensure compliance with prevailing legislation, eg: the Council will not permit any activities to take place at the hall that are likely to cause public unrest, disorder or offence eg: of a racial or sexual nature.
- The Council will wish to have an annual review of programming to assess how use has developed and reserves the right to make reasonable request for changes

Special Considerations

- The Council requires that existing user groups should be supported at current costs and prices (with inflation) for at least 3 years.
- Extra attention must be taken to ensure continuation of provision for user groups at other facilities during the displacement caused by any building works
- The Council operates a 'no smoking policy' and this must be adhered to at the Town Hall during times of use with the exception of private bookings.
- The Council expects that there is, at all times of use, an appropriate level of staffing cover to ensure public health and safety

HITCHIN HALLS AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Analysis Ref.	Category	Sub Category	Facility	Address	
H16	AR	1	Hitchin Town Hall	Town Hall, Brand Street	SG5 1HX
H1	AR	2	Bancroft Hall	Bancroft Hall	
H28	AR	2	St Michaels Mount Community Centre	St. Michael's Road	SG4 0QY
H30	AR	2	St.John's Community Centre	St John's Road	
H34	AR	2	Walsworth Community Centre	88, Woolgrove Road	SG4 0AU
H36	AR	2	Westmill Community Centre	Westmill Community Centre	SG5 2PG
H3	BB	1	Christchurch Hall	Bedford Road	SG5 1HR
H4	BB	1	Church House	Churchyard	SG5 1HP
H5	BB	1	Friends' Meeting House	Brand Street	
H11	BB	1	Hitchin Christian Centre	Hitchin	
H17	BB	1	Holy Saviour Church	Radcliffe Road	
H20	BB	1	N Herts Minority Ethnic Forum	Unity House, Whinbush Road	SG5 1PH
H32	BB	1	Sun Hotel	Sun Hotel	
H31	BB	1	St.Mary's Church	St. Mary's Church	
H33	BB	1	Tilehouse Street Baptist Church Hall	Tilehouse Street Baptist Church Hall	SG5 2EF
H35	BB	1	Walsworth Road Baptist Church Hall	Walsworth Road	
H38	BB	1	Woodside Hall	Woodside Hall	
H2	CG	1	Benslow Music Trust	Ibberson Way, Benslow Lane	SG4 9RB
H8	CG	1	Highover School	Cambridge Road	SG4 0JP
H12	CG	1	Hitchin Girl's School Hall	Highbury Road	
H15	CG	1	Hitchin Priory	Tilehouse Street	SG5 2DL
H19	CG	1	Legion Hall	Paynes Park	
H21	CG	1	North Herts College	North Herts College	
H24	CG	1	Priory School	Bedford Road	SG5 2UR
H29	CG	1	St.Faith's Church Hall	Woolgrove Road	
H37	CG	1	Wilshere-Dacre School	Fishponds Road	SG5 1NS
H39	CG	1	Hitchin Town F.C.	Fishponds Road	
H7	DO	1	HBS Sports Centre	Sports Centre of Hitchin Boys' School	SG5 1JB
H10	DO	1	Hitchin British Schools	41-42 Queen Street	SG4 9TS
H13	DO	1	Hitchin Market Theatre	Sun Street	SG5 1AE
H14	DO	1	Hitchin Museum	Paynes Park	SG5 1EH
H22	DO	1	North Herts. College Sports Centre	Cambridge Road	SG4 0JD
H25	DO	1	Queen Mother Theatre	Woodside, Walsworth Road	SG4 9SP
H26	DO	1	Ravidassia Community Centre	Knowl Piece	SG4 0TY
H27	DO	1	Riverain Bowls Club	Woolgrove Road	SG4 0AT

DERIVED FROM ISSUE D

LAST UPDATE: 06.06.07

TITLE OF REPORT: HITCHIN COMMITTEE – THE WAY FORWARD

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval to the remaining 5 dates for meetings of the Committee in 2007/08 and debate the future programme for the Hitchin Committee in the ensuing Civic Year .

2. THE FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

3. COMMITTEE SUGGESTED DATES

- 3.1 The following dates are suggested for the remaining 5 meetings of the Area Committee in 2007-2008:

- (i) Thursday, 26 July 2007
- (ii) Tuesday, 25 September 2007
- (iii) Tuesday, 20 November 2007
- (iv) Tuesday, 15 January 2008
- (v) Tuesday, 18 March 2008

- 3.2 The dates provide for (roughly) a two month gap between meetings. Members' views are invited.

4. HITCHIN TOWN TALK

- 4.1 For the Committee to consider the continuation of Hitchin Town Talk and frequency e.g. prior to the five committees listed at 3.1 above.

5. HITCHIN COMMUNITY SURGERIES

- 5.1 For the committee to consider the continuation and the schedule for the Community Surgery as presented at Appendix A.

- 5.2 Also to agree that the Community Surgery will take place in Hitchin Market Place from the surgery held on Saturday 5 May 2007 to the surgery proposed for Saturday 3 November 2007 (with a move to Church House should the weather be inclement), the surgeries in December 2007, January and February 2008 at Church House and moving back to Market Place on 1 March 2008.

6. HITCHIN COMMITTEE – MEETING VENUES

- 6.1 To consider other venues for the five meetings of the Hitchin Committee – other than the venues used at present (Benslow Music Trust, Roman Catholic Church Hall, Nightingale Road and Christ Church, Bedford Road).

7. AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

- 7.1 At the pre – agenda meeting held on 18 May 2007 the Chairman requested that Members be invited to submit items that could be placed on future agenda.

- 7.2 The following suggestions have been received:

1. The maintenance of public spaces in Hitchin, footway repairs, gratings in Hitchin High street;
2. Clearance of Trade waste from Hitchin Town Centre;
3. Maintenance of Hiz riverside and Windmill Hill;
4. Traffic management including traffic calming;
5. Churchgate development;
6. 20 m.p.h. speed in Hitchin;
7. The future for Hitchin – ‘its sense of place’ and its individuality;
8. Public participation from a wider group of local organisations;
9. Influencing the Planning Process, how can the Hitchin committee make its collective view known on planning applications placed before the Central Planning Control Committee;
10. Scrutiny – to discuss issues which could be best scrutinised by the Hitchin Committee;
11. Engagement with young people;
12. Expand the discussions with local interest groups to other local organisations.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 That the Committee agrees dates for its remaining 5 meetings in 2007- 2008.
- 8.2 That the Committee agrees to the continuation of Hitchin Town Talk and the frequency thereof.
- 8.3 That the Committee agrees to the continuation of Hitchin Community Surgery as per the schedule presented at Appendix A.
- 8.4 That the Committee makes suggestions for alternative venues for the next five meetings of the Committee in the ensuing Civic Year.

8.5 That the Committee agrees to the inclusion of topics and themes for future agenda and indicates two or three items for the next meeting.

9. CONTACT OFFICER

5.1 Ian Gourlay, Senior Committee & Member Services Officer x4403
E-mail: ian.gourlay@north-herts.gov.uk

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TITLE OF REPORT: CHAMPION NEWS

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise the Committee of the activities and schemes with which the Community Development Officer has been involved during the past month.
- 1.2 To bring to the Committee's attention some important community based activities that will be taking place during the next few months.

2. FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

3. PROJECT/ACTIVITY/SCHEME DETAILS

- 3.1 **Allotments update** - the first of the season's cultivation checks has taken place and 20 non cultivation letters have been sent to Hitchin tenants.

Burford Way – a meeting has been arranged by the Parks and Open Spaces Officer with the Westmill Youth Project Manager to look at possible projects at Burford Allotments.

Ransoms – The Grounds Management Team are investigating concerns about the temporary replacement pedestrian gate.

- 3.2 **Walsworth Festival** – the Festival took place on Sunday May 20th, 2007. It was well attended with a variety of community groups raising money for their organisation as well as arena events, including ferret racing and a Sea Cadet display.

- 3.3 **Bancroft Gardens** - a visual audit has been carried out in Bancroft Gardens by the police, club users and Officers from NHDC. A number of recommendations were discussed all aimed at reducing anti social behaviour which takes place in the Gardens.

One of the recommendations was to remove the line of conifers between the gardens and the road to enable the police to have sight of the gardens. An affordable method of procurement has been found to carry this out but as this would significantly affect the overall look of the gardens members' comments would be welcome. This would be the first step of improvements to Bancroft Gardens that would include lighting and introduction of CCTV. However, it is considered that the full benefits of any other improvement would not be fully realised until the views into the gardens had been improved.

The issues surrounding the lighting and CCTV will be subject to a report in the future once any work on the hedge has been undertaken.

Additional comments can be made to the Grounds Maintenance Manager.

- 3.4 **Easter Sports Courses** – Sports courses across the District had a 93% uptake. The courses were more closely linked with local clubs which gave opportunities for local groups to promote their activities and also provided a wider range of activities such as snorkelling. Trampolining was once again very popular in Hitchin.
- 3.5 **Shopping Trolleys** – Sainsburys in Hitchin have registered with the Abandoned Shopping Trolleys scheme and if anybody sees an abandoned Sainsbury trolley they phone **01462 454833** and the trolley will be collected within 48 hours. If this doesn't happen then enforcement will collect the trolleys and reclaim the costs from the store. There is more information on this on the NHDC website.
- 3.6 **Angels Group** – the Angels Group which supports parents of children with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) and ASD (Autistic Disorders) held a very successful Awareness Day Conference at Priory School, Hitchin. In conjunction with Hertfordshire County Council the event entitled 'The ADHD Child in your Classroom' had a number of speakers on the various aspects of ADHD. They hope to run similar events in the future.
- 3.7 **Hitchin Boys School** – eleven boys from Hitchin Boys School, on an industrial visit, spent half a day at NHDC to see how the Council runs and the possible employment opportunities. Feed back was very positive.
- 3.8 **West Hill** – progress is being made on possible improvements to provide easier access to the Town Centre for wheelchair users and residents of West Hill.
- 3.9 **Youth Project Westmill** – the young people of Westmill have been working on a DVD presentation eliciting the views of the residents of Westmill about their environment. During the Easter holidays they planted 22 trees in The Crescent with the help of Groundwork Hertfordshire. The young people were also supported by the residents. The Youth Project has been working with other youth agencies in Westmill to provide integrated working which has proved beneficial to all.
- 3.10 **Hitchin Town Centre Steering Group** – the Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance supports the Committee in their praise of Keith Hoskins. She is also aware of the concerns expressed by the Committee regarding the lack of officer attendance at the Town Centre Initiative meetings.

By policy, NHDC leaves a post vacant for three months in order to fund recruitment for a new postholder. The Policy and Partnerships' section were unsuccessful in a recruitment campaign held during Autumn 2006, but have now recruited Jim Brown who commenced work on April 30th 2007.

Mr Brown will now be attending HTCI meetings and the Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance has been in regular consultation with the Hitchin Town Centre Manager on key issues during the vacancy period.

- 3.11 **Town Centre Youth Project** – one of the agencies that has been working on the project have identified a space that may be suitable for music nights, which was one of the requests of the young people. A meeting has been arranged with various agencies and organisations on Thursday 5th June, 2007 to discuss the possibilities.

- 3.12 **Street Trading Permits** – the Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance, the Head of Housing and Environmental Health and Council Solicitor are still awaiting clarification from Herts County Council regarding their position on street licensing in Hitchin on highways land; this process has been prolonged by the sickness of a key officer at County Highways. Consideration hinges around the issue of licensing the Market Place in Hitchin for events and outdoor refreshment, not around the issue of street licensing within the town in general. Discussions have already taken place with the Hitchin Town Centre Initiative regarding the Council's inability to delegate responsibility for street licensing to town centre managers, since they are not in the employment (i.e. an officer) of the authority; nor indeed can premises with fixed premise licences be required to purchase another licence for any chairs or tables placed onto the highway provided they constitute part of the same licensed business.

The Committee can be rest assured that a full response to the HTCI and this Committee will follow as soon as possible.

- 3.13 **Allotments Policy** – there is an Allotments Strategy 2004 – 2009 which was adopted by the Council. In 2008 the Strategy will be reviewed and updated from 2009. Members will be consulted.

3.14 **Events**

Saturday 23rd June – British Schools Summer Fair, Market Place

Saturday 30th June – Hitchin Festival begins with Centenary of Scouting Celebration, Market Place

Saturday 30th June/Sunday 1st July – Triangle Festival

Sunday 1st July – Triangle Community Garden Open Day with Triangle Festival Family Day, Ransoms Recreation Ground

Saturday 7th July - Hitchin Festival Environmental Fair, Market Place

Saturday 14th/Sunday 15th July – ROTW

Saturday 21st July – Hitchin Band Sponsored Blow – Hitchin Hospital Garden Party

Sunday 22nd July – Hitchin Festival Finale with the London Philharmonic Skiffle Orchestra

4. RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 That the Committee endorses the actions taken by the Community Development Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being.

5. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 To ensure that the Committee are kept informed of the work of the Community Development Officer.

6. CONTACT OFFICER

- 6.1 Margaret Bracey, Community Development Officer. Ext: 4830.
Email. margaret.bracey@north-herts.gov.uk.

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TITLE OF REPORT: ANNUAL GRANTS, DEVELOPMENT, DISCRETIONARY AND VISIONING BUDGETS 2007- 2008

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise the Committee of the current expenditure and balances of the Area Committee's delegated funds.
- 1.2 For the Committee to consider the level of financial assistance to be awarded to Hitchin Bowls Club.
- 1.3 For the Committee to consider the level of financial assistance to be awarded to Hitchin Town Centre Initiative.
- 1.4 For the Committee to consider the level of financial assistance to be awarded to 3rd Hitchin Scout Group.
- 1.5 For the Committee to consider the level of financial assistance to be awarded to Hitchin Christian Centre Kool Kids Holiday Club

2. FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This Report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

3. ANNUAL GRANTS, DEVELOPMENT, DISCRETIONARY AND VISIONING BUDGETS UPDATE

- 3.1 The present summary is attached at Appendix A.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Committee has delegated powers to administer funds from the budgets described.
- 4.2 There are no legal implications pertinent to this report.

5. FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial implications that have not been specified in the main body of the report.

6. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

- 6.1 Ward Members will be consulted about relevant grant applications.
- 6.2 Ward Members have been consulted in connection with projects that have been carried forward from previous years.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The Committee is asked to note the current expenditure and balance of the Development budget.
- 7.2 That the Committee allocate £1,000 to Hitchin Bowls Club as set out at Appendix B.
- 7.3 That the Committee allocate £5,000 to Hitchin Town Centre Initiative as a contribution towards the costs of hanging baskets and Christmas Lights as set out at Appendix C.
- 7.4 That the Committee allocate to 3rd Hitchin Scout Group £710 as set out at Appendix D.
- 7.5 That the Committee do not allocate funds to Hitchin Christian Centre Kool Kids Holiday Club on this occasion (Appendix E).

8. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 This report is intended simply to inform Members of the financial resources available to the Committee. It draws attention to the current budgetary situation, assists in the effective financial management of the Area Committee's budget and ensures actions are performed within the Authority's Financial Regulations and the guidance contained in the Grants procedure.
- 8.2 The awarding of financial assistance to voluntary organisations and the use of discretionary spending allows the Committee to further the aims and Strategic Objectives of the Council.

9. APPENDICES

- 9.1 Appendix A - Annual Grant and Development Discretionary Budget Update
- 9.2 Appendix B – Grant application - Hitchin Bowls Club
- 9.3 Appendix C – Grant application - Hitchin Town Centre Initiative
- 9.4 Appendix D – Grant Application - 3rd Hitchin Scout Group
- 9.5 Appendix E – Grant Application - Hitchin Christian Centre Kool Kids Holiday Club

10. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 10.1 Margaret Bracey, Community Development Officer, margaret.bracey@north-herts.gov.uk, x4830
Jodie Penfold, Assistant Directorate Accountant, jodie.penfold@north-herts.gov.uk

x4332

HITCHIN AREA COMMITTEE BUDGET 2007/2008

SUMMARY/ TOTALS	Funding	Allocated	Spent	Outstanding	Unallocated Budget
Revenue Visioning	£7,260	£7,260	£3,693	£3,567	£0
Capital Visioning	£112,600	£110,350	£0	£110,350	£2,250
Central Area Grants	£22,610	£16,000	£3,095	£12,905	£6,610
Discretionary - Bearton Ward	£15,060	£11,760	£0	£11,760	£3,300
Discretionary - Highbury Ward	£22,540	£19,580	£345	£19,235	£2,960
Discretionary - Oughton Ward	£7,830	£5,590	£0	£5,590	£2,240
Discretionary - Priory Ward	£4,610	£2,200	£413	£1,787	£2,410
Discretionary - Walsworth Ward	£3,374	£64	£38	£26	£3,310
Total	£195,884	£172,804	£7,584	£165,220	£23,080

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

10

TITLE OF REPORT: HITCHIN TOWN CENTRE MANAGER

This report will be in the format of an oral presentation.

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