

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

HITCHIN COMMITTEE

**Meeting held at Christ Church Hall, Bedford Road, Hitchin,
on 18 March 2008 at 7.30p.m.**

MINUTES

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

IN ATTENDANCE: *John T. Campbell, Chief Executive
Louise Symes, Planning Projects Manager
Steve Crowley, Leisure Projects Manager
Linda Wharmby, Strategy Officer – Community Safety
Margaret Bracey, Community Development Officer,
Nigel Schofield, Committee Administrator.*

93. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, thanked everyone who attended the Hitchin Town Talk and welcomed those making a presentation to the Committee.

94. APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Deepak Sangha.

95. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

There were no items of other business tabled at the meeting.

96. MINUTES – 15 JANUARY 2008

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 January 2008 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

97. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

The Chairman read out the following:

Members are reminded that any declarations of interest in respect of any business set out in the agenda, should be declared as either prejudicial or personal interest and are required to notify the Chairman of the nature of any interest declared at the commencement of the item on the agenda. Members declaring a prejudicial interest should leave the room and not seek to influence the decision during that particular item.

98. PRESENTATION OF A PETITION – REQUEST FOR A BUS SHELTER IN REDHILL ROAD, HITCHIN

Councillor Mrs Joan Kirby thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to present a petition of 110 signatures from local residents in the Redhill Road, Bedford Road and Westmill Area which supported the need for a bus shelter in Redhill Road opposite the local shopping parade. The Chairman was pleased to accept the petition and the Committee expressed its support for the bus shelter which would provide cover for local residents waiting for bus services.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the presentation of a petition be recorded;
- (2) That the Hitchin Committee unanimously supported the request for a bus shelter in Redhill Road, Hitchin at a suitable location opposite the local shopping parade;

- (3) That the NHDC Transport Policy Officer be requested to contact the appropriate department at Hertfordshire County Council and take forward the request for a bus shelter.

99. PRESENTATION OF A PETITION – OBJECTION TO THE POTENTIAL OPENING UP OF WESTBURY CLOSE, HITCHIN SHOULD LAND ALLOCATED SOUTH OF OUGHTONHEAD LANE BE UTILISED UNDER THE LAND ALLOCATION PLAN (REF. H/R 30)

The representative of residents in Westbury Close and adjacent roads thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to present a petition of 76 signatures which stated opposition to the opening up of Westbury Close to through vehicular traffic should Land at Site H/R 30 south of Oughtonhead Lane, Hitchin be developed as residential land within the Green Belt. The Chairman was pleased to accept this petition and requested that the Planning Projects Manager should take note of the concerns of local residents as part of the public consultation.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the presentation of a petition be recorded;
- (2) That the Planning Projects Manager be requested to take note of the concerns of the residents of Westbury Close and include as part of the public consultation responses to the Land Allocation Plan.

100. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – Land Allocation Plan – Areas H/R 14, 24,25 and 30

The representative of the West Hitchin Action Group thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee. The West Hitchin Action Group wished to express its concerns and opposition to the development of residential housing on Green Belt land that were four sites identified in the Land Allocation Plan (Areas: H/R 14,24,25 and 30). The Action Group considered that if the four areas were given over to residential land then this would be additional and disproportionate growth in Hitchin, the loss of Green Belt land should be opposed and the additional vehicular traffic from the four sites onto Oughtonhead Way, Pirton Road and Offley Road would make the current congested traffic problems at peak periods far worse.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the representative of the West Hitchin Action Group be thanked for the presentation.
- (2) That the Hitchin Committee expressed its unanimous opposition to any development on Green Belt land that surrounded Hitchin.

101. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – Land Allocation Plan – Implications for Hitchin

The representative of Hitchin Forum thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and referred to the Land Allocation Plan (LAP) 'issues and options'. It was the opinion of many residents that Hitchin had a disproportionate amount of housing development since 2000 and that any extra housing – this time in the Green Belt on the outskirts of the town was unacceptable. There would be a loss of open space for Hitchin residents and sports facilities. The Forum also wished to oppose any more development on the grounds of traffic congestion, not only in existing and new residential roads but in particular Old Park Road and Pirton Road. The land identified in the LAP for residential housing had been objected to by local residents prior to the publication of the Land Allocations Plan.

Hitchin Forum also objected to the proposal to use the Transco site at Cadwell Lane for housing and or sports facilities and that this site should be protected for 'road to railfreight' transfer as the site was adjacent to the East Coast Main Line with a sidings that could be re-instated. The Forum also proposed that the current operations at Hitchin railway station should be transferred to the Cadwell Lane industrial area. The main point raised by the Forum was the current practice of placing new housing in as many 'pockets' as possible without considering the employment and industrial needs of Hitchin.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the representative of Hitchin Forum be thanked for the informative presentation;
- (2) That the information provided be noted;
- (3) That the Hitchin Committee again expressed its unanimous opposition to any development on Green Belt land that surrounded Hitchin.
- (4) That the Hitchin Committee expressed its unanimous opposition to any employment use of the Transco site;
- (5) That the Hitchin Committee expressed its unanimous support to use the Transco site for industrial purposes e.g. railway sidings for the transport of aggregate and or waste metals.

REASON FOR DECISIONS

To allow the Hitchin Committee continue with its support for local residents in the Cadwell Lane area.

102. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – RHYTHMS OF THE WORLD 2008

The representative of the ROTW 2008 Committee thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to update the Committee with details of the 2008 Festival. Since the confirmation that the 2008 event would be held at Priory Park, Hitchin the Committee had been working very hard to prepare the Event Licence application before 31 March 2008.

The Committee noted that an entry charge of £5 per adult over 18, £4 for 6 to 17 year olds with no charge for 5 and under would be made on each day, with children under 12 accompanied by an adult. A maximum of 14,000 people on the site at any time with no re-admittance on the day unless space was available and a second charge would be levied if applicable. The entrance gates would be opened at 11 am each day and last admittance at 10pm on Saturday and 8pm on Sunday with no dogs except guide dogs.

The Committee were pleased to note the alcohol policy and that only adults with wrist band ID would be served alcohol, a maximum of 4 cans of beer or cider and one bottle of wine could be brought onto the site per person. There would be 3 bars and one Champagne/Wine Bar

The representative of the ROTW 2008 Committee urged everyone to support this important community event for Hitchin and requested that local residents should come forward to volunteer to help on the event as without this support the festival could not continue to be a success each year.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the representative of the Rhythms of the World 2008 Committee be thanked for the information;
- (2) That the location of Priory Park for the Rhythms of the World 2008 Festival be noted;
- (3) That the decision to make an entrance charge on both days of the festival be noted.

REASON FOR DECISIONS

To allow the Hitchin Committee continue with its support for local voluntary groups.

103. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – SOUND BASE STUDIO – UNDER 18 DRY PUB

The representative of Sound Base Studio thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee.

The representative was pleased to advise that a facility for an under 18 dry pub had been located at a building in the market area. This venue would be an under 18 entertainment venue that could provide an alternative for young people that congregated on Windmill Hill and other locations particularly on Friday and Saturday nights. It was proposed to make the venue look like a night club, with dance floor, lights and sound system, music would be the main theme to allow up and coming bands a platform. All users of the under 18 dry pub would have an ID check and this would be very much a self help project and not a commercial venture, consequently, there would be a need for financial support to cover rent and utilities and with this in mind it was proposed that a grant application would be made to the next meeting of the Hitchin Committee.

The Chairman and Committee were very pleased to note that the under 18 dry pub was due to open soon and that this facility would be very important for the young people of Hitchin and that the Committee would be pleased to receive a grant application in due course.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the representative of Sound Base Studio be thanked for the presentation;
- (2) That the information provided on the location for an under 18 Dry Pub be noted;
- (3) That the Community Development Officer be requested to contact Sound Base Studio in order to make an appropriate grant application to the next meeting of the Hitchin Committee to be held on 3 June 2008.

REASON FOR DECISIONS

To allow the Hitchin Committee continue with its support for local voluntary groups.

104. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – THE DELL – A COMMUNITY PROJECT

The Events Director of Voices in the Park thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and that it was proposed to hold a charity event in The Dell in the summer of 2008.

Finance was available to construct a stage though support would be needed from Groundwork to tidy up The Dell and do heavy works in order that members of the public could safely use this area

The Chairman and Committee thanked the Events Director for the presentation and on behalf of the Committee gave their best wishes for a successful event this summer.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Event Director of 'Voices in the Park' be thanked for the presentation;
- (2) That the Hitchin Committee supported the proposals for a Community event in The Dell.

REASON FOR DECISIONS

To allow the Hitchin Committee continue with its support for local voluntary groups.

105. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – THE TRIANGLE CONTROLLED PARKING ZONE

The representative of the Triangle Residents for an Acceptable Parking Scheme (TRAPS) thanked the Chairman for an opportunity to address the Committee and that TRAPS was a separate group to the Triangle Residents Association (TRA).

The representative advised the Committee that the provision of a Controlled Parking Zone in the Triangle Area had been a long and tiresome process which hopefully was now in its final stages towards implementation. The residents must decide what they wanted to have as a Controlled Parking Zone and that there should be one scheme only – a split scheme would be detrimental to the success of a CPZ. There were still some issues to be resolved and therefore delay before the final scheme was agreed.

The Chairman thanked the representative of TRAPS for the short presentation and as a Bearton Ward Member hoped that the CPZ scheme could be agreed soon in order to alleviate the problem of residents parking in the Triangle Area.

RESOLVED: That the comments on the Controlled Parking Zone scheme in the Triangle Area be noted.

REASON FOR DECISIONS

To allow the Hitchin Committee continue with its support for the successful implementation of a CPZ in the Triangle Area.

106. WINDMILL HILL, HITCHIN – ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND A DESIGNATED PUBLIC PLACE

The Chief Executive reminded the Committee that at the meeting held on 15 January 2008 (Minute 88 refers) discussion had taken place on the need for a Designated Public Places Order (DPPO and usually known as an Alcohol Free Zone) at Windmill Hill. The Chief Executive confirmed that the report was for information, interim and unfortunately did not provide an immediate answer to the problems at Windmill Hill, and that there was currently only one DPPO in the central area of Royston. The Royston DPPO had been in place since November 2007 for a period of two years as approved by Cabinet at its meeting held on 28 February 2006 (Minute 181 refers) and endorsed by Council at the meeting held on 1 March 2006 (Minute 95 refers). The Chief Executive also advised the Committee that at two meetings held in 2007 the Baldock and District Committee had agreed to proceed with a DPPO but subject to the outcome of the Royston experiment.

The Committee noted that The Responsible Authority Group (RAG) guided work on partnership work linked to Community Safety and that the implementation of a DPPO must have the support of all RAG partners. The Chief Executive accepted that there were several issues associated with the activities observed on Windmill Hill that needed discussions with the police which may or may not need a DPPO. One of the main issues was an expected displacement to other parts of Hitchin and consequently outside a DPPO and a survey of potential displacement locations – including a neighbouring authority - was necessary. Also, there should be an assessment of the actual level of anti social drinking and disorder at Windmill Hill, with the police providing evidence and history to the extent of the disorder and or nuisance in Hitchin. The Committee noted that the police would have a large input to the decision to provide a DPPO for Windmill Hill due to the need for extra patrols and commitment of police time. The Chief Executive advised the Committee that a report detailing all the appropriate issues would be presented to the Hitchin Committee at the meeting to be held on 3 June 2008.

The Chief Executive provided a comprehensive summary of the legal implications and requirements that had to be satisfied for a DPPO to be allocated to Windmill Hill, and in response to an enquiry of funding of a DPPO the Chief Executive confirmed that RAG had access to funds and that he would make appropriate investigation to source such monies. The Chief Executive also confirmed that displacement issues would be addressed in the report to the Hitchin Committee on 3 June 2008.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the updating information provided in the report of the Chief Executive be noted;

- (2) That the Hitchin Committee duly noted that the following information would be provided to the next meeting of the Responsible Authority Group to be held on 16 April 2008:
 - a. A detailed analysis of all anti – social behaviour and crime in the Windmill Area;
 - b. A list of all possible interventions that should be considered as a response;
 - c. An interim review of the Royston Designated Public Place Order;
- (3) That the Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance be requested to present another updating report to the next meeting of the Hitchin Committee to be held on 3 June 2008 which would include any outcomes of the Responsible Authority Group meeting and a review of displacement issues should Windmill Hill become subject to a Designated Public Place Order.

REASON FOR DECISIONS

To allow the Hitchin Committee continue with its support for the provision of a Designated Public Place Order at Windmill Hill.

107. THE TRIANGLE CONTROLLED PARKING ZONE SCHEME

Before presenting the report of the Head of Planning and Building Control the Planning Projects Manager (PPM) tabled a revised Appendix B which confirmed the full extent of the Triangle Area which could be subject to a Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ). The Committee noted that the Triangle Area could be extended to include Trevor Road.

The PPM provided a summary of the various attempts to implement a CPZ in the Triangle Area and confirmed that the last report on this matter had been presented to the Hitchin Committee on 18 April 2006 (Minute 145 refers). Delays to approving the CPZ scheme had included a final definition of what was 'The Triangle Area' the parking of vehicles by residents in The Triangle, but not necessarily their own road, the robustness and clarity of the questionnaire and differing views on a CPZ held by two residents group. In order to expedite the implementation of a CPZ the Council had appointed consultants to speed up the process and the PPM referred the Committee to Appendix A which detailed a timetable in the period 31 March 2008 to 14 July 2008. The PPM confirmed that there would be an exhibition at Holy Saviour Church in Ratcliffe Road as part of the consultation process.

The Chairman advised the Committee that Bearton Ward Members had been in regular contact with the residents groups and requested that Councillor Martin Stears address the Committee.

Councillor Stears thanked the PPM for her report and acknowledged that a lot of work and discussions had taken place over a long period and that it would be inappropriate to come to a speedy resolution in order to implement this CPZ. There still remained concerns from residents in The Triangle not least the definition of what was the outer boundary and the actual wording of the questionnaire and a request for an additional public 'walk in' consultation with Consultants and NHDC officers. Also that arrangements be put in place to provide a discount for residents receiving benefits and the provision of permits for people who work (but not residents) in The Triangle. Councillor Stears also proposed that in order for the two residents groups and other residents to agree all aspects of the consultation documents that the commencement of consultation should be delayed until after 1 May 2008. Councillor Stears also requested that all completed questionnaires should be submitted in a hard copy paper format. The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning advised the Committee that there would an additional cost charged by the consultants for the public 'walk in' consultation as this was not part of the original project brief.

Following a short debate the Committee were in agreement with the proposed alternative substantive motion proposed by Councillor Stears and that there should be one scheme only or no scheme at all. The PPM in response to questions about business permits for workers advised that NHDC did not currently have a policy on this matter and that the Transport FSR would address this issue.

Further to the enquiry about concessions for residents receiving benefit the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning advised that he had requested a review of such a policy should be undertaken throughout North Hertfordshire and following such a review that any agreed concessions on the charges for resident's parking permits should be applied to all aspects of the Council's business.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the contents of the report and the consultation timetable as presented at Appendix A be noted;
- (2) That the revised Appendix B tabled at the meeting which showed the correct boundary to the Triangle Area be noted;
- (3) That the following amendments to the proposals for the Triangle Area Controlled Parking Scheme be agreed:
 - a. That the whole area of the CPZ Scheme should always be referred to as 'The Triangle';
 - b. Before the consultation period commences Bearton Ward Councillors and representatives of the Triangle Residents Association (TRA) and Triangle Residents for an Acceptable Parking Scheme (TRAPS) must be satisfied that the documents to be sent out will be accurate and that outstanding issues had been dealt with, including parking permits for those employed in businesses located in the Triangle Area;
 - c. That all responses made during the consultation period to North Hertfordshire District Council should be made in a paper hard copy format;
 - d. That following the consultation period the whole scheme will be implemented provided there was sufficient support; and if there was insufficient support the scheme would not proceed;
 - e. That the consultation period shall commence as soon as possible after 1 May 2008.
- (4) That the Hitchin Committee agreed to delegate to the Head of Planning and Building Control in consultation with the three Bearton Ward Councillors and the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning the resolution to any objections arising from the pre-scheme consultation and agree the most appropriate way forward;
- (5) That the Planning Projects Manager be requested to contact the appropriate NHDC officers with a view to investigating as a matter of urgency the possibility of providing a discount on the cost of a parking permit for residents who receive benefit payments.

REASON FOR DECISION

To ensure that the Triangle Controlled Parking Zone is delivered as soon as possible to all residents in the Triangle Area in the forthcoming financial year and that the views and concerns of residents and Members are met and effectively managed.

108. ON STREET PARKING ENFORCEMENT IN HITCHIN

The Leisure Projects Manager (LPM) presented the report of the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services and summarised the change over of car parking enforcement from Hertfordshire County Council to NHDC since 15 January 2005.

The LPM described the current operation of on street parking enforcement in North Hertfordshire with particular reference to Hitchin and the number of Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs). The LPM confirmed that enforcement was reliant on road lines and signs being kept up to date especially after any highways works and that due to the complexity of ensuring that road lines were reinstated there would be periods when some locations could not legally be enforced. The Committee noted with surprise that of all PCNs issued in North Herts - 54 per cent of PCNs had been issued for on street offences, 64 per cent for off street offences and 37 per cent in CPZs in Hitchin in 2007.

The LPM next provided a summary of costs and income for the operation of Parking Services and was pleased to confirm that the increased income from off street parking (i.e. car parks) showed that the enforcement of on street parking was working relatively effectively.

Members raised car parking enforcement issues in Hitchin High Street and Tilehouse Street and the visibility of signs to which the LPM advised that all enforcement signs had to be at a regulatory height. Also, why 20 per cent of PCNs were waived to which the LPM agreed that this figure could be improved and that there would be more enforcement against claims in the future.

RESOLVED: That the information provided on the status of On Street Car Parking Enforcement in Hitchin be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION

To allow the Hitchin Committee be aware of the current status of On Street Car Parking Enforcement in Hitchin.

109. HITCHIN TOWN CENTRE MANAGER

The Hitchin Town Centre Manager (TCM) thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee

The TCM advised that he had little to report other than the announcements about the tender for Hitchin Markets and Hitchin Town Hall as a Community Engagement Centre were expected soon. The TCM enquired as to whether the re-announcement of the tendering process for the Churchgate Development had been placed in the Official Journal of the European Union but, unfortunately there was no officer present who could provide an answer. With regard to the possibility of a Community project in Bancroft Park and Gardens the TCM had visited an Eco Build development in Devon and commented highly on the building which would fit well in Bancroft Gardens.

The TCM concluded his short presentation with confirmation that funding would be a problem for hanging baskets and Christmas Lights for Hitchin town centre.

RESOLVED: That the information provided by the Hitchin Town Centre Manager be noted.

110. CHAMPION NEWS

The Community Development Officer (CDO) provided a comprehensive update on her activities since the last meeting of the Hitchin Committee held on 15 January 2008 and updated the Committee on the following: Tilehouse Street Pre-School, Triangle Festival, The Voice of Hitchin Youth, Hitchin Allotments, Hitchin Bowls Club, Purwell Play and Stay, Hitchin Counselling Service, Proposed School Surgeries, Hitchin Link, 2012 Olympics and Bancroft Hall. In response to an enquiry the CDO agreed to provide to Members by email the dates of proposed school surgeries.

Councillor Alison Ashley advised the Chairman that the Hitchin Link with Bingen and Nait St. Georges would celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2008 and whether funds for supporting such celebrations could be made available from Committee Discretionary Budgets in 2008 – 2009. The Chairman proposed and it was agreed that the CDO should make the necessary arrangements to present a grant application on this matter to the next meeting of the Hitchin Committee to be held on 3 June 2008.

The CDO referred the Committee to Appendix A which provided an update on Cadwell Lane Environmental and Safety Issues Task and Finish Group and Members queried the lack of timetable and completion dates e.g. M1 Traffic Regulation Orders in Cadwell Lane for road markings, speed limits and goods vehicle access to Cadwell Lane and adjacent roads. The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning agreed that the provision of target dates was preferable and accordingly agreed to circulate to all members of the Task and Finish Group a revised version of Appendix A that would include target dates where applicable.

On behalf of the Planning Projects Manager the CDO referred the Committee to Paragraph 3.18 and Appendix C and invited Members to provide the details of traffic management schemes that could be presented to the NHHP – JMP for joint matched funding in 2008-2009 at its meeting to be held on 21 April 2008 no later than 11 April 2008.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the actions taken by the Community Development Officer since the last meeting of the Hitchin Committee held on 15 January 2008 be noted and supported;
- (2) That all Members of the Hitchin Committee be requested to submit the locations and type of traffic management controls that could be considered for matched funding by the Hertfordshire Highways Joint Member Panel to the Planning Projects Manager by email (louise.symes@north-herts.gov.uk) no later than 11 April 2008;
- (3) That the Community Development Officer be requested to make contact with the appropriate persons at Hitchin Link in order to facilitate a grant application at the next meeting of the Hitchin Committee to be held on 3 June 2008 concerning the 50th Anniversary of town twinning with Bingen and Nuit St. Georges.

REASON FOR DECISION

To ensure that the Hitchin Committee are advised of the activities of the CDO and note the activities of voluntary groups.

111. ANNUAL GRANTS, DEVELOPMENT, DISCRETIONARY AND VISIONING BUDGET 2007-2008

The Committee considered the current expenditure and balance of the Annual Grants, Development, Discretionary and Visioning budget for 2007 – 2008.

RESOLVED: That the expenditure, allocations, and balance of the current 2007-2008 Development Budget, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be noted;

REASON FOR DECISIONS:

To advise the Hitchin Committee of funds remaining for disbursement in the year 2007-2008 and allow the Hitchin Committee to make appropriate grant awards.

112. GRANT APPLICATION – RHYTHMS OF THE WORLD 2008

RESOLVED: That a grant of £10,000 be awarded in principle from the 2008-2009 Discretionary Budget as a contribution towards the costs of the 2008 ROTW Festival that will take place on 12 and 13 July 2008.

113. GRANT APPLICATION – WYMONDLEY FOOTBALL CLUB

RESOLVED: That a grant of £370 be awarded in principle from the 2008-2009 Discretionary Budget as a contribution to the purchase of new equipment such as: target goals, mini soccer goals and a junior medical kit.

114. GRANT APPLICATION - MINOTAUR AMATEUR BOXING CLUB

RESOLVED: That a grant of £890 be awarded in principle from the 2008-2009 Discretionary budget as a contribution to the costs of providing a timer clock, gloves and headguards in order to promote safer communities by giving young people a facility for recreation and divert activities away from potential anti-social behaviour.

115. GRANT APPLICATION - THE HITCHIN SOCIETY

RESOLVED: That a grant of £440 be awarded in principle from the 2008-2009 Discretionary budget as a contribution to the costs of publicity for the promotion of Heritage Open Days from 11 to 14 September 2008.

The meeting closed at 9.24 p.m.

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Chairman

