

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

HITCHIN COMMITTEE

**Meeting held at Benslow Music Trust, Benslow Lane, Hitchin,
on 23 January 2007 at 7.30p.m.**

MINUTES

PRESENT: *Councillors: Judi Billing (Chairman), Derek Sheard (Vice-Chairman), Alison Ashley, David Billing, Paul Clark, Joan Kirby, Bernard Lovewell, Lawrence Oliver, Deepak Sangha, R. Shakespeare- Smith Martin Stears and R.A.C. Thake.*

IN ATTENDANCE: *David Scholes – Head of Planning and Building Control
Barrie Jones – Head of Financial Services
Mary Caldwell – Planning Control and Conservation Manager
Graham Haerle- Principal Planning Officer,
Ros Allwood – Cultural Services Manager
David Miley – Democratic Services Manager
Steve Crowley – Leisure Projects Manager
Lance Raperport – NHDC Markets Manager
Margaret Bracey - Community Development Officer,
Nigel Schofield – Committee Administrator.*

86. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked those who had attended the Hitchin Town Talk.

The Chairman welcomed the speaker at Agenda Item 5 – Public Participation

The Chairman welcomed the speakers at Agenda Item 6 – Planning Applications.

AGENDA ITEM : 13 HIGHWAY VERGE ASSESSMENT

The Chairman advised that with the Committee's agreement Agenda Item 13 – Highway Verge Assessment would be taken after Agenda Item 7 – Planning Appeals.

87. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Sarah Wren.

88. MINUTES – 12 December 2006

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2006 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

Minute 79 – Planning Applications

06/02187/1 – Brookers Yard and Suzuki and Peter Fish premises off Paynes Park, Hitchin

At the request of Councillor Paul Clark – with support of the Committee it was agreed that the statement read out by the Principal Planning Officer concerning the above application at the meeting held on 12 December 2006 be appended to these Minutes as a matter of record.

89. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Agenda Item 6 – Planning Applications

06/02116/1 – King George V Playing Field, Old Hale Way, Hitchin.

Councillors Martin Stears, Lawrence Oliver and R.A.C. Thake declared a personal interest in this item as they were NHDC appointed representatives to the King George V Playing Fields Management Committee and confirmed that they would remain, speak and vote on this item.

Agenda Item 12 – Disposal of land at rear of 79 – 111 Milestone Road, Westmill, Hitchin.

Councillor Joan Kirby declared a prejudicial interest in that she was a Board Member to North Hertfordshire Homes and would leave the room for the duration of this item.

90. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – HITCHIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The representative thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee. The purpose of this presentation was to bring to the attention of Members and NHDC officers the deficiencies in the Register of Local Important Buildings and advise that this register nor the Hitchin Conservation Area had not been reviewed or amended since 1998 and since that date there had been a very large amount of housing development in Hitchin which had a marked affect on the Hitchin Street Scene. The purpose of such a register was to ensure that local important buildings not listed in 1998 could be considered and a case in point was 89 Walsworth Road, Hitchin – also known as Rose Cottage. There were other buildings under threat now or in the future e.g. Gainsford building (Sikh temple).

The representative requested that there should be an annual review of local important buildings and that local interest groups would be able to give advice to officers.

The Chairman asked the Committee if there were any questions for the Hitchin Historical Society and subsequently requested that the Planning Control and Conservation Manager (PCCM) should respond to the points raised.

The Planning Control and Conservation Manager confirmed that neither the Conservation Area in Hitchin or the Register of Local Important Buildings in Hitchin had been reviewed since 1998. Hitchin had not been re-visited since that time as there were currently 40 Conservation Areas in North Hertfordshire and at present reviews were underway in Royston and Newnham. However, the PCCM accepted that there was a case for looking at the Register of Local Important Buildings in Hitchin with the caveat that the most important part was the review of criteria to allow buildings to be placed on the register which would involve officer time and consultation with local groups such as the Hitchin Historical Society. With specific reference to 89 Walsworth Road it was clarified that this property did not meet the criteria for inclusion on the Register.

The Chairman requested and the Committee agreed that the PCCM should make resources available to review the criteria for the register and then in consultation with local interest groups such as the Hitchin Historical Society prepare a new register of Local Important Buildings, and that the inclusion or non-inclusion of 89 Walsworth Road (Rose Cottage) be conveyed to all interested parties as soon as possible.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the representative from the Hitchin Historical Society be thanked for the presentation;
- (2) That the Planning Control and Conservation Manager be requested to revisit the criteria used for forming the List of Local Important Buildings and enter into discussions with the Hitchin Historical Society and Members when preparing the revised list;
- (3) That the Planning Control and Conservation Manager be requested to present the outcomes of her discussions, review of criteria and a revised list of Local Important Buildings to a future meeting of the Hitchin Committee.

91. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Committee heard oral presentations as follows:

Application Ref. 06/02558/1 – 89 Walsworth Road, Hitchin.

Mr J. Harvey spoke as an objector.

Mr G. Beale spoke as the applicant's representative.

RESOLVED to determine the planning applications as set out in the report of the Head of Planning and Building control and as indicated in the following schedule:

SCHEDULE

Reference Number	Description of Development and Location	Decision
06/02558/1	89 Walsworth Road, Hitchin. Residential development comprising nine 3 bedroom dwellings and two 2 bedroom dwellings, new vehicular access and ancillary works, following demolition of existing buildings	Deferred (see (a)below)
06/02607/1	Land off Walsworth Road Residential development of 92 dwellings comprising 23 one bedroom and 58 two bedroom flats in 2 blocks of 3 & 4 storeys over a semi-basement parking area for 87 vehicles. 8 two bedroom & 3 four bedroom 2 & 3 storey terraced houses with 10 parking spaces. New vehicular & pedestrian access via Walsworth Road. Emergency and service vehicle access & pedestrian access via existing driveway between 64 & 66 Dacre Road. Landscaping & ancillary works. (Approval of siting, design and external appearance details pursuant to outline permission ref 03/00959/1 granted 21 June 2005)	Refused (see (b) below)
06/02116/1	King George V Playing Fields, Old Hale Way, Hitchin. Erection of 6 x 8m floodlight columns in association with the refurbishment of existing tennis courts.	Conditional Permission (as per report)
06/02696/1	29 Willoughby Way, Hitchin. Single storey rear extension following demolition of existing conservatory.	Conditional Permission (as per report)

- (a) That with regard to planning application reference 06/02558/1 a decision be **DEFERRED** for the following reason:

In order that officers may advise upon all criteria for including buildings on the Register of Important Local Buildings and whether in their opinion the existing building at 89 Walsworth Road (Rose Cottage) merits such inclusion.

- (b) That with regard to planning application reference 06/02607/1 permission be **REFUSED** for the following reason:

By reason of their overall mass, Blocks A and B would be overbearing and incongruous in the street scenes of Walsworth Road and Nightingale Road and detrimental to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. This would conflict with the objectives of Policies 1 and 26 of the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No. 2 with Alterations.

92. PLANNING APPEALS - UPDATE

The Principal Planning Officer confirmed that four appeals had been lodged and no appeals had been determined since the meeting of this Committee held on 12 December 2006.

- Appellant Mr C. Kilic
Address 151 Bearton Road, Hitchin.
Description: Extension of opening hours for an existing hot food takeaway.
Ref. 06/00592/1
Procedure: Written representations.
- Appellant The Elite Retirement Account of P.K. Shadbolt and B. Smith
Address Land at the Wratten, Wratten Road East, Hitchin.
Description: Detached 3 Bedroom dwelling.
Ref. 06/02374/1
Procedure: Written representations.
- Appellant Lloyds Pharmacy
Address Unit 1, rear of 93-95 Bancroft, Hitchin SG5 1NQ
Description: Installation of new shop fronts to provide corporate frontage for 1 retail unit.
Ref. 06/01089/1
Procedure: Written representations.
- Appellant Stephen Howard Homes
Address Land to rear of and including 134 to 150 evens, Grove Road, Hitchin.
Description: 2 storey and part 3, 4 and 5 storey development to provide 39 one and 38 two bedroom flats; 4 two, 6 three and 10 four bedroom houses (total 97); 77 basement and 32 surface level garage/parking spaces. New vehicular and pedestrian access adjacent River Purwell; landscaping and ancillary works. (as amended by plans received 13.09.06 and 16.10.06)
Ref. 06/01197/1
Procedure: Public Inquiry.

93. HITCHIN MARKETS

The Project Manager confirmed that Cabinet met on 19 December 2006 (Minute 118 refers) to review and decide whether to extend the 6 month reduction of stall rent schemes at Hitchin Tuesday and Saturday markets. Cabinet had resolved *inter alia* that the Hitchin Committee should be requested to consider and agree a financial contribution towards the extension of the reduced rents trial. The Projects Manager advised the Committee that Cabinet would meet on 30 January 2007 to receive the comments/suggestions of the Hitchin Committee prior to a final decision on the continued subsidy of the reduced stall rent schemes.

The Project Manager advised the Committee that at the meeting of Cabinet on 19 December 2006 the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and E government made the following comments:

- The Council had a need to ensure longevity of Hitchin and all other markets in the District;
- Despite the efforts of markets staff and traders, the trial had not been a financial success;
- Although the number of stalls had increased, this had not been to the levels targeted;
- The Market was battling against national trends of decline in markets utilisation;
- The needs of the Market should be balanced with the needs of other retailers in Hitchin;
- In view of the foregoing, a recommendation that Option 1(Appendix A) should be pursued.

The Committee noted that officers had met with the Hitchin Market Traders on 8 January 2007 to discuss the seven options (Appendix A) and the following comments had been recorded:

1.The Traders Association believe that it would be a mistake for the Reduced Rents Scheme for Hitchin Tuesday and Saturday Markets not to continue, as it has had a positive effect on stall holder morale and footfall in general.

2.The Scheme should continue until a decision concerning the Churchgate development has been reached, or at least until the Management Arrangements of North Hertfordshire District Markets has been finalised.

3.The Traders Association requested that their 2 year Business Plan be considered again, with a possible slight increase of rents at the end of the first year.

4.A suggestion put forward by the Traders was that of increasing the daily car parking charge by £1.50 and charging Casual Traders an administration fee of £3.00 per day. Also, ceasing the period of four weeks consecutive trading before being able to become a Licensed Trader, but charge one month's worth of parking to entice them to trade on the Market for longer. All these points are providing the trader constantly sells the commodity stated when they started trading.

The Project Manager advised that the above option (Point 4) had not been pursued as it is anticipated that it will only create a small amount of revenue, leaving a £23,500 variance to budget.

The Project Manager referred the Committee to the Cabinet report at Appendix B and the Options Available and the Associated Risks at Appendix A. The Committee noted that the months of January, February and March were described as the 'kipper season' and a very difficult time to attract traders and consequently stall utilisation would not increase greatly, but with reduced rents the new and existing traders would probably continue. The Project Manager advised the Committee that the reduced rents had a positive impact on the morale of the market traders and although the reduced rents scheme was against the Council's agreed budget strategy if the trial was continued this could promote the economic vitality of the market.

The Committee noted that there were seven options for consideration and the Chairman led a debate on these options where Members expressed their views on each option and discussed the merits of financial support from Hitchin Committee or that continued support should be sourced from central funds within North Herts District Council.

Throughout the debate Members were minded of the support within Hitchin for the Market and sought ways in which Hitchin Committee could match this support. The Community Development Officer provided an update on the available funding within the overall discretionary budget for 2006-2007 and the remaining funds in 2006 -2007 allocated to each Member for individual disbursement. The Committee debated each option and confirmed that they preferred Option 4 which would allow the subsidy to continue until the end of period 13 (17 March 2007). The Community Development Officer confirmed that £4550 remained as unallocated funds in the 2006-2007 Discretionary Ward Budget and the Committee agreed that this sum would be provided with the proviso that Cabinet agreed to allocate the balance of £4781 to cover the 'kipper' season.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the information provided in the report from the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services be noted;
- (2) That the information provided in the report from the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services presented to Cabinet on 19 December 2006 be noted:

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:

- (1) That two of the options for continued financial support to the Tuesday and Saturday Hitchin Markets as presented at Appendix A be ranked as follows:

Rank: Option:

- | | |
|----|--|
| 1. | Option 4: Continue £10 and £15 scheme until the end of period 13 and then initiate Option 2, until 31 July 2007.
Potential loss = £9,331; |
| 2. | Option 2: Tuesday, implementation from 20 February to 31 July 2007.
Casual: £1.50 per foot; Licensed £1.30 per foot.
Saturday
Casual: £1.90 per foot; Licensed £1.90 per foot.
Potential loss = £4,911 |

- (2) That the Hitchin Committee agreed to allocate £4353 of un-allocated funds from the 2006 – 2007 Ward Discretionary Budgets and a contribution of £312 taken from Bearton Ward previously allocated funds (total of £4665 which is a 50 per cent contribution to the costs of Option 4) subject to the proviso that Cabinet at its meeting to be held on 30 January 2007 commits the sum of £4666 which would confirm the £10 and £15 scheme until 17 March 2007, followed by the introduction of a reduced cost per foot rate until 31 July 2007.

REASON FOR DECISIONS:

For Hitchin Committee and Cabinet to provide joint financial support for the continued development of Hitchin Market, and allow Hitchin Market continue to play its part in the vibrant Hitchin business community.

94. AN ARTS, MUSEUMS AND HERITAGE STRATEGY FOR NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE

The Cultural Services Manager (CSM) thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and request comments and suggestions on the draft Arts, Museums and Heritage Strategy for North Hertfordshire.

The CSM provided a detailed synopsis of activities leading up to the preparation of this draft strategy and thanked all Members and local interest groups for their contributions to the draft strategy as presented at Appendix A. The CSM advised the Committee that the outcomes of the consultation with the five area committees would be presented to the Arts, Museums and Heritage Forum on 5 February 2007, then to Cabinet on 27 March 2007 and to Council on 29 March 2007.

The Committee reviewed the draft strategy and following questions and responses from the CSM:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the information provided on the Draft Art, Museums and Heritage Strategy be noted;
- (2) That Members be invited to submit to the Culture Services Manager by email (ros.allwood@north-herts.gov.uk) any comments and/or suggestions on the draft strategy for incorporation in the final report to be presented to Cabinet at its meeting to be held on 27 March 2007 and the meeting of Council to be held on 29 March 2007.

REASON FOR DECISIONS:

To ensure that a wide consultation is undertaken throughout North Hertfordshire on the Draft Arts, Museums and Heritage Strategy.

95. AREA GOVERNANCE AND COSTS OF DEMOCRACY

The Head of Planning & Building Control presented a joint report of the Heads of Community Development & Cultural Services, Planning & Building Control and Legal and Democratic Services to the Committee that set out a series of proposals and options to determine savings which could be made if the Council's approach to its governance and decision making arrangements was restructured. The Head of Planning and Building Control confirmed that this report was being brought to all Area Committees as a direct response to implementing the Council's decision to make savings of £50,000 which was part of the Service and Financial Planning Process for 2006/2007.

The report had been presented to Cabinet at its meeting to be held on 19 December 2006, and the Head of Planning and Building Control tabled a copy of the resolutions that the Cabinet made at that meeting as follows:

Minute 119

- (1) That the principles of the key proposals in the report, as set out in Section 4 be agreed;
- (2) That Options 1 and 2, with regard to the establishment of a central Development Control Committee and a reduction of Area Committees, be investigated further;
- (3) That the Area Committees be consulted on the finer details of the report and its implications, and that an all Member Workshop be arranged in the New Year to allow Members to meet collectively to consider further the key proposals contained in the report;
- (4) That a greater delegation of responsibilities to Cabinet Portfolio Holders be considered by the Leader of the Council;
- (5) That the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be requested to prepare a report on the Constitutional implications of the proposed changes set out in the report;
- (6) That a further report on the detailed proposals and timescales for implementation be submitted with recommendations to Cabinet on 27 February 2007 and Council on 1 March 2007;
- (7) That the further report referred to in (6) above considers the effect of the options relating to a reduction in Area Committees on the work of the Community Development Officers;
- (8) That officers report on the potential efficiency savings which may accrue, other than those already identified in the report, should the key proposals be agreed."

The Head of Planning and Building Control acknowledged that the proposals represented a fundamental change to the way that the Council's civic process currently operates, but stated that the resulting arrangements would be more streamlined and less bureaucratic. He also informed the Committee that the report under consideration presented only the outline proposals and principles, and that a further report with more detailed information about the proposals would be presented to Cabinet at a later meeting.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the information provided on proposals for Area Governance and Costs of Democracy Savings as presented to Cabinet on 19 December 2006 be noted;
- (2) That the following comments and suggestions be noted by the Head of Community Development and Cultural Services for incorporation in the final report to be presented to the meeting of Council to be held on 1 March 2007;

- a. That the Hitchin Committee (by a majority) do not support the proposals detailed in Option 1 and Option 2 for the amalgamation of Hitchin Committee with part of Southern Rural Committee;
- b. That there should be no reduction in the number of Community Development Officers currently assigned to the five Area Committees until any new arrangements made under the proposed Cost of Democracy Savings had been proven to be effective against the anticipated reduction in officer duties;
- c. That the Southern Rural Committee should remain as constituted and not amalgamated with Letchworth or Hitchin Area Committees;
- d. That the proposal to take planning control away from Area Committees did not meet with positive or negative support;
- e. That the Head of Community Development and Cultural Services be requested to compare the savings that could be made from a reduction of officers meetings in relation to the proposed savings of costs of officers attending fewer Committee meetings;
- f. That the Head of Community Development and Cultural Services should note the majority view of the Hitchin Committee that the proposed savings of £50,000 compared to the overall budget of £1,628,150 was minor when set against such a major destructive change to the current arrangements for Area Governance.

REASON FOR DECISIONS

To ensure that the Head of Community Development and Cultural Services is advised of the strong concerns and views of Hitchin Committee concerning the proposed changes in Area Governance.

96. HITCHIN ELECTORAL WARDS – POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES

The Democratic Services Manager (DSM) reminded the Committee that the Electoral Commission had under the Periodic Electoral Boundary Review accepted without reservation the recommendations of the Boundary Committee. As a result of this decision an Order had been issued to allow the use of new ward boundaries at elections scheduled for 3 May 2007.

The DSM advised that in order to introduce the new arrangements it would be necessary to revise existing polling districts and polling places as some streets and properties had been moved from one ward to another. The DSM clarified the definitions of a Polling District and Polling Place and recommended that the boundary of a Polling District within a Ward should be the same as a Polling Place. This arrangement would allow a Polling Station to be placed at a convenient point for electors within the Polling Place.

The DSM referred the Committee to Appendices A, B and C which gave details of the proposed Polling Districts, Existing Polling Districts and Polling Stations for use on 3 May 2007 respectively.

After a short debate the Committee:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the proposal for the establishment of Polling Districts as described at Appendix A be agreed;
- (2) That the alignment of all Polling Places within the Wards of the Hitchin Area Committee as per the defined Polling Districts be agreed;
- (3) That the list of Polling Stations for use on 3 May 2007 as listed at Appendix C be agreed.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To support North Hertfordshire District Council in its review of the Polling Districts in light of the North Hertfordshire (Electoral Changes) Order 2006.

97. DISPOSAL OF LAND AT REAR OF 79-111 MILESTONE ROAD, WESTMILL, HITCHIN

The Head of Financial Services advised the Committee that North Hertfordshire Homes had been granted planning permission (Hitchin Committee – 4 July 2006 Minute 27 refers) to demolish 3 blocks of flats (36 units) in Milestone Road, Westmill, Hitchin and replace with 41 new units. In order to construct these extra units it would be necessary to use land currently occupied by a children's playground (which was vacant). North Hertfordshire Homes had confirmed that there would be a mix of rented and shared ownership for the 41 units.

The HFS clarified Sections 25 and 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 and the reasons for sale of land at a discount to a Registered Social Landlord.

Following a short debate including questions to the HFS the Committee were in agreement to proceed with the officer's recommendation plus the request that the HFS should advise North Hertfordshire Homes of the essential need for a new children's playground at a suitable location on the Westmill Estate.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the proposal for the sale of land at the rear of 79 – 111 Milestone Road as surplus to the Council's requirements be agreed;
- (2) That the reason for sale to North Hertfordshire Homes at a discounted value in order to provide affordable housing be agreed;
- (4) That the Head of Financial Services be requested to include the approval of the Hitchin Committee for the sale of this surplus land in his report to the meeting of Cabinet to be held on 30 January 2007.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To meet the need for affordable housing in North Hertfordshire within the requirements of Section 25 of the Local Government Act which allows the disposal of land to Registered Social Landlords at less than market value for the development of housing.

98. HIGHWAY VERGE ASSESSMENT - HITCHIN

The Parks and Countryside Development Manager (PCDM) presented a report on behalf of the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services, The Head of Planning and Building Control and the Head of Housing and Environmental Health which detailed the background work by officers concerning damage to highway verges in Hitchin. The PCDM referred the Committee to Appendix A and the first 17 locations for Hitchin. Each location had a description of the damage, the cause of the damage and remedial action. In addition, each location/repair was given a priority rating of: High, Medium and Low.

The PCDM through the Chairman invited comments on the listed schemes, a request for a priority listing of the 17 locations and advice of any other locations in the Hitchin area that had a lot of verge damage due to encroachment by motor vehicles.

The Chairman invited the Committee to comment on the listed items at Appendix A

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the information provided in the report be noted;
- (2) That the status concerning damage to highway verges in Hitchin (17 schemes) as presented at Appendix A to the report be noted;
- (3) That the 17 schemes be prioritised as follows with four additional locations:

Priority:	Scheme:	Action:
None	The Crescent: Lack of parking.	Remove from list as works by North Hertfordshire Homes is imminent and remedial works to verges should wait until this is complete.
High	Tennyson Avenue: Vehicle over run.	Reinstate.
High	St. Michaels Road: Vehicle over run.	Reinstate. (verges needing repair after road works)
High	St. Michaels Road: Vehicle over run.	Reinstate. (Area opposite school)
Medium	21 Burford Way: Lack of parking	Reinstate.
Medium	41 Burford Way: Lack of parking.	Reinstate.
Medium	69 Burford Way: Vehicle over run.	Reinstate.
Medium	79 Burford Way: Lack of parking.	Reinstate.
Medium	28 Milestone Road: Lack of parking.	Reinstate. (no fault found).
Medium	97 Wymondley Road: Vehicle over run.	Knee rail.
Medium	93 Wymondley Road: Bad parking by others.	Knee rail.
Medium	99 Wymondley Road: Lack of parking.	Knee rail.
Medium	Ninesprings Way: : Bad parking by others.	Reinstate.
Medium	Broadmead: Vehicle over run. Meadow Way:	Reinstate.
-	A505 opposite Meadowbank:	No fault found.
-	Whitehill Road:	Works already programmed.

(4) That officers from North Hertfordshire District Council and North Hertfordshire Highways be requested to make site visits to the following locations in Hitchin for an assessment of damage due to encroachment on verges, propose remedial action for each location and assign a priority rating:

- (a) Old Hale Way
- (b) Periwinkle Lane
- (c) Bearton Green
- (d) Bearton Road (between Whitehurst Avenue and Brampton Park Road).

99. CHAMPION NEWS

The Community Development Officer provided a detailed summary of her activities since the last meeting of the Hitchin Committee held on 12 December 2006 and future events including: North Hertfordshire Book Festival, Charlton Society, Hardy Close Residents Association, Hitchin Town Centre Locality Panel, Westmill Youth Work Project, Ickleford Road Resident's Association, Hitchin Museum, Hitchin Allotments, Bancroft Play Area, Gurdwara, Sainsburys Trolleys and Controlled Parking Zones

With regard to the Westmill Youth Work Project the Committee noted that there were five aims for delivery through a multi agency approach and that monitoring and evaluation would continue through out the project.

There had been progress at several allotment sites in Hitchin including safety measures, gates, fencing and plot clearance (Minute 101 refers).

The CDO was pleased to report that Sainsburys in Hitchin had recently registered with the Abandoned Trolley Collection Scheme and would collect reported trolleys within 48 hours.

The Committee noted that the notice of intent to inform an order in the Avenue CPZ had been made on 4 January 2007, and that a draft questionnaire for the Triangle CPZ was under preparation. The Committee were very disappointed at the delays to date and expressed the need for officers to proceed as quickly as possible. The Committee also recorded their concern that with the closure of CPZ selection whether the enforcement of Traffic Regulation Orders could be maintained to an acceptable level and whether this alternative form of regulation would be acceptable to residents in other parts of Hitchin.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the information provided by the Community Development Officer on activities since the last meeting of the Hitchin Committee held on 12 December 2006 be noted;
- (2) That the Head of Planning and Building Control be advised of the Hitchin Committee's extreme disappointment at the delays to the introduction of a Controlled Parking Scheme in the Triangle Area;
- (3) That the Head of Planning and Building Control be advised of the Hitchin Committee's concerns over the decision not to continue with Controlled Parking Zones in other areas of Hitchin should residents request such controls;
- (4) That the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport be requested to ensure that resources allocated to the Controlled Parking Schemes in The Avenue/Chiltern and Triangle are ring fenced and advise the Chairman of his findings;

100. ANNUAL GRANTS, DEVELOPMENT, DISCRETIONARY AND VISIONING BUDGET 2006/2007

The Committee considered the current expenditure and balance of the Annual Grants, Development, Discretionary and Visioning budget for 2006 – 2007.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the expenditure, allocations, and balance of the current 2006-2007 Development Budget, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be noted;
- (2) That the outstanding balance of £4353 in the 2006-2007 Ward Discretionary Budget be allocated to the subsidised stall rent scheme at Hitchin Market (Minute 93 above refers);
- (3) That £312 be taken from the pre-allocated budget applicable to Bearton Ward Discretionary Budget 2006-2007 and added to the sum of £4353 for the continued Hitchin Market stall rent subsidy as per Option 4 (Minute 93 refers);
- (4) That the Committee noted that the allocations of Ward Discretionary funds as detailed at Minutes 93 and 101 completed the allocation of all monies from the Hitchin Ward Discretionary Budget for 2006-2007.

REASON FOR DECISION:

To advise the Hitchin Committee of funds remaining for disbursement in the year 2006/2007.

101. GRANT APPLICATION – BURFORD WAY ALLOTMENTS

RESOLVED: That a grant of £200 be awarded as a contribution towards the costs of clearing land at Burford Way Allotments for the release of two new plots to the waiting list. Each Member agreed to contribute the sum of £16 from their individual Discretionary Ward Budget.

102. HITCHIN TOWN CENTRE MANAGER – UPDATE

The Hitchin Town Centre Manager (TCM) provided an update on activities and events in Hitchin during the previous three months:

1. There had been a good AGM for the Town Centre Initiative with over 50 attendees. The TCM confirmed that he would make a presentation on the AGM and the business community at the meeting of the Hitchin Committee to be held on 17 April 2007;
2. The TCM thanked the Hitchin Committee for their contribution to the cost of the Christmas lights and with other donations there had been a shortfall of £692.
3. The TCM raised several issues of concern: Churchgate – the business community were anxious for this project to proceed as a matter of urgency, Hitchin should not be left behind (i.e. Development plans for Letchworth Garden City and Stevenage) sustainable funding through service delivery or asset development, partnership with the police in tackling retail crime, anti-social behaviour, upgrading of radio equipment, review of the problems linked to the night-time economy, providing a drop-in venue for young people.
4. More than 50 enquiries had been received about the ROTW Festival for 2007.
5. With the Town Centre Office performing an ever increasing roll of an Information Centre it was time to consider a reprint of useful publications e.g. Town guide, Min guide, Restaurant guide, Accommodation list, Brief guide to Historic Hitchin and Blue Plaque guide as stocks were running low.
6. The TCM confirmed that he had attended meetings of and with: Caldicott Centre, Hitchin Festival Committee, Fairtrade, Health Awareness, Tourism seminar with Association of Town Centre Management, Action for Market Towns Focus Group, Business Ratepayers Association, Letchworth Town Centre Manager, Letchworth Heritage Foundation and many meetings with NHDC officers to discuss items of common interest.

In conclusion the TCM thanked the Hitchin Committee for all the support to the community and was pleased to advise that Hitchin had been commended on BBC Breakfast TV as an outstanding example of a thriving town centre – and one of four mentioned nationally.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the information provided by the Hitchin Town Centre Manager be noted;
- (2) That the Hitchin Town Centre Manager be requested to make a presentation on 'Hitchin' at the meeting of the Hitchin Committee to be held on 17 April 2007.

The meeting closed at 9.49 p.m.

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Chairman