

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

HITCHIN COMMITTEE

Meeting held at Christ Church Hall, Bedford Road, Hitchin,
on 30 May 2006 at 7.30p.m.

MINUTES

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

Note: Councillor R.A.C. Thake left the meeting at 8.15 p.m.

IN ATTENDANCE: *Vaughan Watson, Head of Leisure and Environmental Services, Steve Crowley, Projects Manager-Leisure Division, David Miley, Democratic Services Manager, Louise Symes, Projects Manager – Planning Policy and Projects, Margaret Bracey, Community Development Officer, and Sue Fisher, Media Officer.*

Councillor M.R.M. Muir, Cllr Ian Knighton and Cllr F.J. Smith.

4. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, and a warm welcome to Councillor Bernard Lovewell on his election as Member for the Walsworth Ward. The Chairman offered the congratulations of the Committee to Councillors: Alison Ashley, David Billing, Paul Clark and Deepak Sangha on their re-election to the Priory, Oughton, Highbury and Bearton Wards respectively.

The Chairman also welcomed the Leader of the Council who was visiting each area committee during the current cycle.

The Chairman introduced two further items to the agenda:

- a) Cemetery Gates – St John's Road, Hitchin;
- b) The Churchgate Development – Update;

and drew attention to the information note, circulated by the Planning Officer, setting out recently lodged/determined planning appeals.

The Chairman confirmed that the July meeting of the Committee and the next Town Talk would take place on 4 July as originally scheduled.

5. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology was received from Cllr. Joan Kirby.

6. MINUTES – 18 April 2006

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 April 2006 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

7. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Agenda Item 8 – Annual Grants, Development, Discretionary and Visioning Budgets 2005/2006

Ref. Grant Application – Hitchin Rugby Club

Councillor Paul Clark declared a prejudicial interest as he was a coach at Hitchin Rugby Club and left the room for the duration of the item.

Councillors Martin Stears, R.A.C. Thake and Lawrence Oliver declared a personal interest as they were representatives of NHDC on the Hitchin Rugby Club Management Committee and reserved their right to speak and vote.

8. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: PRESENTATION OF A PETITION

An anticipated petition concerning traffic issues in Wilbury Way, Hitchin, was not

presented to the meeting.

RESOLVED: That, should such a petition emerge in the near future, it would be received by the Democratic Services Manager and a report on the matter would be prepared for the next meeting in liaison with Cllr. R.A.C.Thake

9. CEMETARY GATES – ST JOHN’S ROAD, HITCHIN

Councillor Sarah Wren described the concerns expressed, by visitors to the cemetery, when people abuse the ability afforded to drivers of being able to drive cars into the cemetery grounds. Visitors had indicated that the situation is now such that their privacy is being invaded.

The points raised during the discussion included:

- closing the gates to prevent cars entering would deny access to many people with legitimate reasons for gaining vehicular access;
- publicity may help to dissuade those who misuse the facility;
- the gates are in a poor state of repair.

RESOLVED: that a report be presented to the next meeting exploring ways to ensure that the facility is used only for the purpose for which it is intended.

REASON FOR DECISION: to ensure that progress is made in allaying the fears of visitors to the St John’s Road Cemetery.

10. PLANNING APPEALS

The Committee noted that two appeals had been lodged since the meeting of this Committee held on 18 April 2006.

Appellant Mr F. Delbasso
Address 106 Bedfrod Road, Hitchin.
Description Detached garage.
Ref. O6/00129/1HH
Procedure Written representations.

Appellant Mr and Mrs P. Hollingsworth
Address 143 Wymondley Road, Hitchin.
Description Two storey side extension.
Ref. O5/01328/1HH
Procedure Written representations.

The Principal Planning Officer confirmed that two appeals had been determined since the meeting of this Committee held on 18 April 2006.

Appellant Kim Trading Ltd.
Address 99 – 100 Ickleford Road, Hitchin.
Description Three storey side and rear extensions with new third floor over existing building to provide internal retail floorspace on ground floor with 6 two bedroom flats over, single storey rear extension and archway access to 7 parking spaces. Part demolition of existing buildings (as amended by drawing 04322/05A and 04322/06B received 5 October 2005.
Ref. 05/01216/1
Decision Appeal DISMISSED on 16 May 2006.
Committee or delegated Delegated.

Appellant Eave Projects Ltd.
Address Land rear of 93-98 Bancroft, Hitchin.
Description Implementation of Planning Permission ref 03/00569/1, dated 18 September 2003, without compliance with condition 4 (archaeological observation and recordings).
Ref. 05/01503/1

Decision Appeal DISMISSED on 24 May 2006.
Committee or Delegated.
delegated

11. CHURCHGATE DEVELOPMENT – UPDATE

The Projects Manager (Planning Policy and Projects) presented a verbal report from recent meetings with the developers and their agents concerning asset management and further information, relating to the planning brief, supplied to the developer.

The point raised included:

Discussions between the developer, the Hitchin Town Centre Initiative and the Hitchin Chamber of Commerce had taken place to outline developer's initial proposals.

Officers had discussed with the developer's agents the guidance set out in the Churchgate Planning Brief including, the Market, the Churchgate Centre and suitable car parking.

The views of the Council and the Hitchin Area Committee, in relation to the adoption of the Churchgate Planning Brief were made clear. These included:

- Considering development proposals within the area of the agreed Planning Brief;
- The scale of the development should be in sympathy with the rest of the town;
- That the market should be retained and located in the area of high footfall;
- Views of St. Mary's Church should be retained and enhanced;
- Sufficient car parking was to be provided, including replacement of existing parking and provision of additional parking to meet any additional floor space requirements;
- The riverside walk should be opened up and enhanced along its length and provide/ facilitate a high quality link between Bridge Street and Biggin Lane;
- A detailed implementation plan must be submitted and agreed with the council that includes management of the displacement of the Churchgate retailers as well as the market during construction.

12. REVIEW OF THE USEAGE AND PROMOTION OF MARKETS IN NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group on markets in North Hertfordshire, presented to the Committee, the Group's analysis of current promotional activities and recommendations for improving public awareness and attracting more visitors to the markets.

The key points noted during the discussion were as follows:

- The Leisure Projects Manager is currently acting in the vacant post of markets manager on Tuesdays and Saturdays and would be working to implement any policy on promotional activity, adopted by Cabinet, as a result of the recommendations;
- It would be important for a permanent appointment to be made to the vacant post to ensure fulfilment of any action plan emerging from Cabinet;
- Future input from market traders and the Town Centre Manager, to promotional activity, will be invaluable;

The action plan should ensure that suggestions in the report for addressing promotional weaknesses are strengthened;

RESOLVED: that the Committee receive the action plan at its next meeting and consider how it may be involved in the future

13. CHAMPION NEWS

RESOLVED: That the information provided by the Community Development Officer on activities since the last meeting of the Hitchin Committee held on 18 April 2006 be noted;

REASON FOR DECISION:

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

14. GRANTS TO VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT BUDGET 2005/2006

The Committee considered the current expenditure and balance of the development budget.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the expenditure, allocations, and balance of the current 2005-06 Development budget, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be noted;
- (2) To confirm the grant of £5,000 to The Triangle Festival set out in paragraph 1.4 of the report.

REASON FOR DECISIONS:

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

15. GRANT APPLICATION – HITCHIN RUGBY CLUB

RESOLVED: That a grant of £1,000 be awarded to Hitchin Rugby Club as a contribution to the costs of providing a watering system for the sports pitches.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The awarding of financial assistance to voluntary organisations and the use of discretionary spending allowed the Committee to further the aims and Strategic Objectives of the Council

16. GRANT APPLICATION – HITCHIN TOWN BAND

RESOLVED: That a grant of £1,000 be awarded to Hitchin Town Band as a contribution to the day to day costs associated with the training of young musicians.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The awarding of financial assistance to voluntary organisations and the use of discretionary spending allowed the Committee to further the aims and Strategic Objectives of the Council

17. HITCHIN TOWN CENTRE MANAGER – UPDATE

The Committee considered the oral report of the Hitchin Town Centre Manager regarding recent and forthcoming events.

The points noted during the discussion included:

- the developing partnership between the Town Centre Initiative and the Primary Care Trust regarding health awareness and other initiatives;
- the continuing tendency for trolleys from Sainsbury's Supermarket to be deposited and left for comparatively long periods in the River Hiz.

RESOLVED: that, in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee, the Community Development Officer makes contact with Sainsbury's with a view to establishing a more effective trolley removal policy.

REASON FOR DECISION: to preserve the visual amenity and natural habitat of the River Hiz.

The meeting closed at 8.30 p.m.

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Chairman