

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

HITCHIN COMMITTEE

Meeting held at Roman Catholic Church Hall, Nightingale Road, Hitchin,
on 12 July 2005 at 7.30 p.m.

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

IN ATTENDANCE: *Head of Community Development, Principal Planning Officer,
Project Manager – Leisure, Markets Manager,
Community Development Officer and Committee Administrator.*

20. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (1) The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked those who had attended the Town Talk;
- (2) At the Chairman's request everyone stood for a minute's silence in memory of the late Honorary Alderman Mrs Audrey Carss who had been an NHDC Councillor representing Oughton Ward from 1973 to 2002 and for those who lost their lives in London on 7 July 2005;
- (3) The Chairman welcomed the representatives from Hitchin Scouts who would make a presentation at Agenda Item 5;
- (4) The Chairman welcomed the Principal Strategy Development Manager from Hertfordshire Highways who would make a presentation on the Asset Management System;
- (5) The Chairman advised that there would be two speakers at Planning Applications – Agenda Item 9;
- (6) The Chairman advised that Hertfordshire Constabulary were unable to attend this meeting due to a change in personnel at Hitchin Police Station. The Police had confirmed that they would attend the meeting to be held on 16 August 2005.
- (7) The Chairman invited all present to offer their congratulations to the Hitchin Town Centre Manager on the award of Town Centre Manager of the Year 2005.

21. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

22. MINUTES – 24 May 2005

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2005 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

23. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was tabled.

24. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No Declarations of Interest were made.

25. PRESENTATION – HITCHIN SCOUTS

The District Commissioner for Hitchin Scouts thanked the Chairman and Committee for the opportunity to address the Hitchin Committee. He provided a very comprehensive review of Scouting in the UK, Hertfordshire and Hitchin. Currently some 700 young persons are part of Hitchin Scouts ranging from Beavers, Cub Scouts, Scouts, Explorers, Network Scouts to Service Team. Although there were

waiting lists for Beavers and Cub Scouts, the major problem was the recruitment and retention of adult leaders and some areas e.g. Westmill did not have any scout groups. The Committee noted that Scouting was open to all with no restrictions, and a short discussion took place on how an approach could be made to young persons in ethnic minority groups e.g. the Sikh Community and that Oughton Ward Members would like to meet with Scout leaders to discuss the possibility of a scout group in Westmill.

RESOLVED : That the District Commissioner for Hitchin Scouts be thanked for the presentation.

26. HITCHIN MARKET MAINTENANCE AND CLEANSING ISSUES

The Markets Manager thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and reminded the Committee that at its meeting held on 12 April 2005 (Minute 142 b.refers) a detailed updating report on the improvement programme for the maintenance, cleaning and advertising of Hitchin Market had been requested.

The Markets Manager confirmed that a Comprehensive Work Programme had been prepared and that the majority of the planned work had been completed within specified deadlines. The Committee noted that a monthly meeting took place to monitor the work programme and was attended by NHDC officers and a representative from Hitchin Market Traders Association. Also the Portfolio Holder for Leisure met with the Head of Leisure each week and the market programme was a regular agenda item. The Manager advised the Committee that a Marketing Plan for 2005/ 2006 was in use and referred the Committee to Appendix B which provided a summary of the key areas for advertising and the promotion of Markets to new stall holders.

The maintenance and cleaning programme was ongoing with graffiti painted over, refurbishment of public conveniences and market stalls had been steam cleaned, with the toilets inspected twice each morning to ensure that the toilets are cleaned to a set standard. The Committee were pleased to note that the first stage of re-paving had been completed.

RESOLVED: That the information provided on the work programme be noted;

REASON FOR DECISION:

To ensure that the Hitchin Committee are made aware of Hitchin Market utilisation, maintenance and cleansing issues.

27. ASSET MANGEMENT IN HERTFORDSHIRE

The Principal Strategy Development Manager for Hertfordshire Highways thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to make a presentation on Asset Management.

By way of a Powerpoint presentation he commenced with a description of the structure of Hertfordshire Highways, how it was organised on a day to day basis and was a three-way partnership between Herts CC, Amey Lafarge and Mouchel Parkman. With regard to Asset Management which was used by Hertfordshire Highways the Committee noted that Hertfordshire was the first authority in UK to produce a Highways Asset Management Plan and the approach was systematic, information based and decision making. The aim of this approach was to manage the County's highways assets, providing the desired level of service in the most cost-effective manner through sustainable use of physical resources and continuous improvement in work practices.

The Principal Strategy Development Manager confirmed that CPA had given a three star rating to the highway service and that a Best Value Review in 1998/1999 had promoted the adoption of an asset management approach as the deterioration of the highways network at the time of the review had been estimated at the rate of approximately £50 million per annum.

The Committee noted that a key aspect of the asset management approach used by Hertfordshire Highways was the introduction of road deterioration modelling, which produced a road maintenance that compiled work programmes to give best value for money. The information used to conduct this modelling was drawn from sources including the age and construction details of all roads from a database, technical surveys (conducted by Hertfordshire Highways Engineers), records of re-active repairs e.g. the filling and repair of potholes, and of projects completed or planned within the current year.

RESOLVED: That the Principal Strategy Development Manager from Hertfordshire Highways be thanked for his presentation.

28. REPORT OF THE JOINT TOPIC GROUP (HIGHWAYS)

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee advised the Committee that the Joint Topic Group had conducted a nine month review of Hertfordshire Highways and at the meeting of Cabinet held on 15 March 2005 (Minute 197 refers) it had been agreed that all five Area Committees should receive this report for consideration.

Councillor Martin Stears confirmed that the delay had occurred in order to allow the Hitchin Committee receive a presentation about Asset Management from Hertfordshire Highways at the same meeting as providing comments and suggestions on the report of the Joint Topic Group.

Having received the presentation on Asset Management, noted the findings of the Joint Topic Group and following a short debate the Committee:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the contents of the report of the Joint Topic Group (Highways) be noted;
- (2) That Minute 197 from Cabinet dated 15 March 2005 be noted;
- (3) That the recommendations made at Chapter 11 – Supporting Area Committees be agreed;
- (4) That in particular recommendation 19 ‘ That each Highway Authority response to a planning application fully cites the thinking behind the recommendation’ should be strongly applied;
- (5) That in particular recommendation 17 ‘ That Hertfordshire Highways uses one of its bi-annual attendances at meetings to provide a series of presentations that will be informative for both Members and local people, subject to the agreement of the Area Committee should be strongly applied’, which would allow the contents of the Integrated Works Programme to be better understood.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:

- (1) That Cabinet take the appropriate actions to ensure that the following referrals from Hitchin Committee are applied:
 - (a) That the recommendations made at Chapter 11 – Supporting Area Committees be endorsed;
 - (b) That in particular recommendation 19 ‘ That each Highway Authority response to a planning application fully cites the thinking behind the recommendation’ be endorsed;
- (5) That in particular recommendation 17 ‘ That Hertfordshire Highways uses one of its bi-annual attendances at meetings to provide a series of presentations that will be informative for both Members and local people, subject to the agreement of the Area Committee be endorsed’;

REASON FOR DECISIONS

To ensure that highways issues are effectively addressed by NHDC and Hertfordshire Highways.

REASON FOR DECISION:

To ensure that highways issues are effectively addressed by NHDC and Hertfordshire Highways.

29. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Committee heard oral representations regarding the following:

05/00095/1 Land at William Ransom Site, Whinbush Road, Hitchin.

Mr J. Sampson spoke as an objector's representative.

05/00095/1 Land at William Ransom Site, Whinbush Road, Hitchin.

Gae Parry spoke as the applicant's representative.

RESOLVED to determine the planning applications as set out in the report of the Planning Control and Conservation Manager and as indicated in the following schedule:

Reference Number	SCHEDULE Description of Development and Location	Decision
05/0095/1	Land at William Ransom site, off Whinbush Road, Hitchin. Residential development consisting of 2,3 & 4 storey buildings to provide 173 dwellings (42 one bedroom and 112 two bedroom flats, 12 two bedroom and 7 three bedroom houses); 188 parking spaces, cycle and refuse stores; new river walkway, works to River Hiz and landscaping; alterations to existing north access and relocation of south access to Whinbush Road; ancillary works; demolition of existing buildings including 4 dwellings (as amended by plans received 11 February 2005, 4 May and 27 June 2005).	Conditional Permission (see (a) below)
05/00810/1	Part of Car Park, Community Centre off John Barker Place, Hitchin SG5 Temporary use of land as a contractor's compound for North Hertfordshire Homes for period July 2005 to July 2006.	Conditional Permission (as per report)

(a) That with regard to planning application reference 05/0095/1 it be **RESOLVED** that permission be **GRANTED** as per the recommendation set out in the report of the Planning Control and Conservation Manager with 6.1(d) being adjusted and an additional condition as follows:

6.1 To make financial contributions of £48,426 towards secondary education, (d) £30,362 towards library facilities and £61,265 towards youth and childcare facilities.

(22) The end windows and safety railings at first and second floors on the north-east elevation of Block B shall be substituted by windows of the same style and size as shown on the remainder of this elevation on drawing no. 1129. Similarly, the bedroom window to serve apartment 9 at third floor level on the Whinbush Road elevation shall be substituted by a window of the same style and size as the adjoining window as shown on drawing no. 134C.

Reason: To safeguard the amenities of nearby residential occupiers.

30. PLANNING APPEALS

The Principal Planning Officer confirmed that one appeal had been lodged since the meeting of this Committee held on 24 May 2005.

Appellant Bellway Homes Ltd
Address Land at William Ransom site, off Whinbush Road. Hitchin.
Description 173 dwellings
Ref. 05/00096/1
Procedure Public Enquiry

The Principal Planning Officer confirmed that one appeal had been determined since the meeting of this Committee held on 24 May 2005.

Appellant Mrs D. Allingham
Address Rear of Ashurst, Wratten Road East, Hitchin.
Description Conversion and extension of existing garage to form 2 bedroom bungalow, double garage (appeal against non-determination)
Ref. 04/01261/1
Decision Appeal DISMISSED 1 July 2005

31. HERTS YOUNG HOMELESS GROUP

The Head of Community Development thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee on this important issue.

The officer advised the Committee that the Herts Young Homeless Group (HYHG) had been established as a charitable organisation in 1998 to provide support for young homeless people aged between 16 and 25 living in Hertfordshire. In 2004/2005 24 young homeless people had approached this authority for assistance.

The Committee noted that external funding for HYHG time expired by 31 August 2005. HYHG had made an application to NHDC for £16,460 to meet interim financial commitments upto 31 March 2006 while they considered longer term funding options. The officer confirmed that although HYHG operated across North Herts the majority (47 per cent) of support would be provided in and around Hitchin and consequently Hitchin Committee were invited to consider a grant from their Development Budget 2005/2006 of £8,230 as a contribution to the costs upto 31 March 2006, which could be made available from the uncommitted funding brought forward from previous years. The Committee noted that funding had been secured from Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation and that the Letchworth Area Committee had made a grant of £10, 000 at its meeting held on 25 May 2005 to Furniture Link as support to the local community who required assistance. (Minute 9 refers).

The Committee were unanimous in their support for the HYHG but expressed concern as to why this request for funding had been made to the Hitchin Committee when this was a District wide provision to homeless young people. Members were also reluctant to commit funds from either their own ward budgets for 2005/2006 or unallocated funds brought forward from previous years at this meeting without further review of the Annual Grants, Development, Discretionary and Visioning Budgets 2005/2006. The discussion centred on the provision of funding from either central resources or as an approach to all area committees for a shared contribution to the sum of £8,230, and it was agreed by Hitchin Committee that Cabinet should be requested to provide this interim funding from central resources.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET: That Cabinet explores a pragmatic way of funding the Herts Young Homeless Group either from central resources or via contributions from the five Area Committees.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

To provide adequate support to homeless young people throughout North Hertfordshire.

32. CHAMPION NEWS

The Community Development Officer provided an update on the following activities and projects since the meeting held on 24 May 2005: Skateboard facility at King George V Recreation Ground – a meeting to discuss design and location would be held on Wednesday 13 July 2005; Wheeled sport facility at Walsworth Common – there will be a meeting on Thursday 14 July 2005 to discuss with potential users their preferred options; Youth Council – Two meetings had been held, a name chosen and projects identified, with the next meeting to be held on 19 July 2005; Citizenship – There will be a Citizenship Day on 19 July at Priory School and three sessions with NHDC Councillors, Youth Development Officer and CDO; Community Centres and Village Halls – Meetings had been held with Licensing and the Management Committees to advise on the requirements of the Licensing Act 2003; Soul Train – Participation by three local schools in this local production for performances on October 28 and 29 at Hitchin Town Hall; Ransoms Recreation Ground (Pavilion) – Discussions had been held with all interested parties in an attempt to eliminate anti – social behaviour.

The CDO provided an update on the Churchgate Development Area Planning Brief and that the brief was out for public consultation until 22 July 2005 and that a Hitchin Visioning Meeting had taken place on 7 July 2005.

RESOLVED: That the information provided on activities undertaken by the Community Development Officer be noted;

REASON FOR DECISION:

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

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

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the 2005/2006 funds in the Visioning Budget of £12,217, the General (Town Centres) Budget of £9,280, the Central Development budget of £2,100 and the total Ward Development Discretionary Budget of £50,640 be noted.
- (2) That the funds in the 2005/2006 General (Town Centres) Budget of £9,280 be released to the Hitchin Town Centre Manager.

REASON FOR DECISION:

To advise the Hitchin Committee of funds available for disbursement in the year 2005/2006.

34. HITCHIN TOWN CENTRE MANAGER

The Hitchin Town Centre Manager thanked the Committee for their congratulations and for the support provided by Members to his nomination for the national award.

He confirmed that the 2005 ROTW in the middle of Hitchin Festival fortnight had attracted record numbers on both days and many kind comments had been received. The major problem this year had been the large amount of litter left by visitors and the Head of Community Development confirmed that the debrief meetings would address this issue.

The 2005 Hitchin Festival had also been very successful with 45 events, 59 performances, of which 16 were free and 18 had been sold out. Due to demand an additional 7 events had been included in the programme.

The Town Centre Manager advised the Committee of repair and restoration work that was needed in Market Place: The Cab Hut, The Clock and barrows/dismountable stalls.

- (1) That the congratulations of the Hitchin Committee be placed on record concerning the award of Town Centre Manager of the Year 2005;

- (2) That the Hitchin Committee welcomed the invitation from Hitchin Initiative and Chamber of Commerce to a meeting where joint items of interest could be discussed;
- (3) That the Licensing and Enforcement Manager be requested to enter into discussions with the Hitchin Town Centre Manager concerning the issue of street trading licences in Hitchin Town Centre.

The meeting closed at 9.59 p.m.

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Chairman