**Hitchin Town Talk minutes Tuesday 14th January 2020**

**18:30 – 19:30 Hitchin Town Hall**

**PLEASE NOTE**

* If you wish to report an issue to NHDC you do not need to wait until the next Town Talk meeting. Compliments, Complaints and Issues can reported anytime to NHDC Customer Services via the NHDC Website or call 01462 474000
* You may also report issues to your local ward Councillor (contact details are on the NHDC website)

**Present**

* Cllr IA Cllr Ian Albert
* Cllr CB Cllr Clare Billing
* Cllr JB Cllr Judi Billing
* Cllr MSH Cllr Martin Stears-Handscomb
* Cllr PC Cllr Paul Clark
* Cllr SC Cllr Sam Collins
* Cllr KH Cllr Keith Hoskins
* Cllr VB Cllr Val Bryant
* Cllr KT Cllr Kay Tart
* Cllr SH Cllr Simon Harwood
* Cllr RT Cllr Richard Thake
* Cllr CS Cllr Claire Strong
* Cllr SN Cllr Sam North

**Apologies**

* Cllr Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg
* Cllr Mike Hughson

**Introduction**

Cllr IA introduced himself as the Chairman of Hitchin Committee and welcomed all attendees as well as thanking them for coming out in the adverse weather.

The Chairman and the Committee paid their respects to Allison Ashley who sadly passed away before Christmas. Allison was a former North Hertfordshire District Councillor who served on the Hitchin Committee for 15 years and was Chairman of the Council for the Civic Year 2008/2009.

John Skeels asked if NHDC will be holding a commemorative event for Allison.

Cllr JB replied that she will be continuing her close discussion with Derrick Ashley about this and assured John as well as the other attendees that the whole committee’s thoughts are with Derrick Ashley and his family.

**Items raised for discussion:**

1. **CP** - Chris Parker Comments on last Hitchin Committee Meeting
2. **BF** - Brian Foreman NHDC Survey, Advertising of Town Talks and the

Hitchin Market

1. **JS** - John Skeels Allison Ashley
2. **AO** - Angela Osborne Traffic Congestion
3. **NC** - Nicky Clark Parking Strategy and Public Transport
4. **MM** - Mary Marshall Maintenance of traffic island on Paynes Park
5. **EC -** Ellie Clarke Highover Development
6. **RD** - Robin Dartington Traffic

CP asked for updates on the questions he raised at September‘s Town Talk in. These were:

- aerials at the Garden Centre and Conifer trees.

- two porta cabins on Old Hale Way

Cllr KT noted that work is ongoing on the mast but chasing up works has proven difficult because multiple phone providers own the aerials. Cllr KT has applied to the government for permission to look into the commercial use of buildings and should have an update shortly. Cllr KT noted that she would update Chris at the next Town Talk or alternatively he could email her directly.

Cllr JB replied to Chris’ query about Old Hale Way. Cllr KT expressed that if action hasn’t been taken on an issue that is concerning residents then they are encouraged to give councillors a ‘nudge’. If councillors are not reminded of issues they cannot try and resolve them.

BF asked why the NHDC Survey is not available for over 55’s

Cllr JB and Cllr MSH noted that they will look into this.

Update: Cllr JB did some research and the outcome was that NHDC have a certain quota of each age group they need to complete the survey. As the operators are completing most of their phone calls during the day, they have already achieved their quota of over 55’s.

BF suggested that Town Talks and Area Committees should be publicised in print so that a wider audience are made aware of them

Cllr JB agreed that this was a good suggestion and that NHDC would certainly look into publicising meetings in as many places as possible in the future.

AO noted that the traffic into Hitchin is terrible coming from villages such as Offley

Cllr SC noted that there is a draft HCC Transport Plan out for consultation at present. Cllr SC urged residents to take part in the consultation and contribute their comments. He told residents to keep an eye on social media as he would be posting the link to the consultation site.

Cllr VB added that the consultation started last week and ends in March.

Cllr PC spoke about the importance of making alternative transport methods more widely available and promoting them. He noted that bike networks and trams have worked very successfully in other towns. Cllr PC added that access to the train station can be problematic and work is currently being done to ameliorate this. However, major infrastructure takes time to resolve.

Cllr JB stated that there is an element of residents needing to take action. The HCC Transport Plan is something that local government can only to do so much to act on but they can act as facilitators for residents.

Cllr JB also mentioned that Cllr Derrick Ashley is working on strategic transport plans and suggested that perhaps Derrick could present at Hitchin Committee in the future.

Cllr SH noted that the A505 is a key part of the traffic issue which NHDC need to be proactive on addressing.

Cllr JB explained that in early autumn she was presented with a feasibility study for opening a tunnel on St Michael’s Road side of the station. Cllr JB has a meeting about this on 17/01/2020 which will provide her with more information.

Cllr IA mentioned Herts County Council - North Central Growth and Transport Plan. It can be found in Consultations section on HCC website and it closes on 31st March 2020.

[https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/about-the-council/consultations/transport-and-highways/north-central-growth-and-transport-plan.aspx#](https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/about-the-council/consultations/transport-and-highways/north-central-growth-and-transport-plan.aspx)

IA advised that the public should take a look at it and that Hitchin Forum and other local initiatives should promote it.

Cllr IA also noted that NHDC need to apply pressure about the Industrial Estate Relief Road.

EC expressed that there is no mentioned of the Industrial Estate Relief Road in the Highover Development Plan

Cllr JB replied that Cllr Derrick Ashley has been applying pressure with regards to the relief road.

Cllr PC added that there are updates on this which were given on Monday (13/01/2020) and that these are now being consulted. Cllr PC noted that NHDC have not been good at collecting S106 money in the past and that the relevant infrastructure is needed to support the new development.

Cllr MSH noted that unless the road is a direct access road to the development, it is not a necessity for the developers report to pick it up.

Cllr KT explained that there is now a consultation period of 5 weeks and that the report has not yet been agreed.

Cllr IA mentioned that there will also be a consultation on A505 corridor later in the summer which will pick up industrial estate road issues.

AO asked what is being done about air pollution levels around the Three Moorhens roundabout

Cllr PC noted that the regulators of air pollution detectors say that the levels of air pollution are decreasing however; he is pushing for a wider area to be surveyed to highlight the issue.

Cllr SC explained that there are two air monitoring stations in Hitchin:

* 1 at Paynes Park
* 1 at Three Moorhens roundabout

But there need to be more monitoring stations. Some areas air pollution will fluctuate naturally and of course Luton Airport expansion will have an impact.

Cllr SC added that the next Transport Users Forum will focus on cycling. He acknowledged that a lot more can be done on the issue of air pollution but a lot of it is reliant of Herts County Council.

NC addressed a comment that was made at Southern Rural Committee

She noted that an NHDC Councillor said that we can’t stop families with young children driving into town. NC explained that this is about changing attitudes and that if we want people to stop using cars then we need our public transport to operate effectively especially in the villages surrounding Hitchin.

Cllr JB responded that residents need to raise awareness around the lack of public transport. They need to lobby for change with the support of NHDC.

MM asked who is responsible for maintaining the traffic island on Paynes Park

Cllr PC noted that he will follow up the query with the Grounds Maintenance team at NHDC. However, Councillors agreed that the responsibility of clearing up any car parts which have broken off during an accident lies with the insurance company.

MM also mentioned that there are two Maple Trees by the pedestrian crossing outside the Quaker Meeting House on Paynes Park that are shedding their leaves making the footpath extremely slippery and unsafe.

Cllr PC replied that this is also something to be picked up by the grounds team and said that he would pass the information on.

BF asked what plans the management company of the market have in place to revitalise it

Cllr KT responded that retail is generally in decline and noted that the market is run by a cooperative of traders and private businesses.

Cllr JB noted that Hitchin Market are very active online at the moment and are doing their best to advertise on social media.

MM asked about public transport, specifically about the reintroduction of school buses

Cllr JB said that it is unlikely that the provision of subsidised school transport will increase with the current County Council.

Cllr RT added that school transport provisions in North Herts are unfortunately reduced to the statutory requirements. He went on to say that unless there is targeted funding coming in from central government, there is unlikely to be a change to the current situation.

Cllr IA thanked residents for all their questions and noted that although there were no direct mentions of the Town Centre and Churchgate in this session, NHDC are planning follow up discussions for the Town Talk in March. In addition to this, NHDC are keen to get the views of young people and have plans to visit schools, colleges etc.

**Town Talk closed by Cllr IA at 7.20pm.**

**The next Hitchin Town Talk will be on Tuesday 10th March , 6.30pm at Westmill Community Centre, John Barker Place, Hitchin SG5 2PG.**