

**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)

The Chair, Councillor Ian Albert, welcomed everybody to the Town Talk

**Present-**

- Cllr Ian Albert (chair)
- Cllr Judi Billing
- Cllr Martin Stears-Handscomb
- Cllr Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg
- Cllr Simon Harwood
- Cllr Paul Clark
- Cllr Sam Collins
- Cllr Val Bryant
- Cllr Clare Billing
- Milan Johnston (notes)

**Issued raised this session**

- |                                 |   |                         |
|---------------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| <b>1. Bins</b>                  | - | <b>Brian Worbey</b>     |
| <b>2. Litter bins</b>           | - | <b>Keith Hoskins</b>    |
| <b>3. Litter day</b>            | - | <b>Ellie Clarke</b>     |
| <b>4. Hitchin Station</b>       | - | <b>Keith Hoskins</b>    |
| <b>5. Corn exchange</b>         | - | <b>Colin Dunham</b>     |
| <b>6. Church gate</b>           | - | <b>Robin Dartington</b> |
| <b>7. Announcement</b>          | - | <b>Cllr JB</b>          |
| <b>8. Adopted land</b>          | - | <b>Chris Parker</b>     |
| <b>9. Rubbish</b>               | - | <b>Member of public</b> |
| <b>10. Closure of buildings</b> | - | <b>Brian Foreman</b>    |

## 1. Bins

BW pointed out that the new service is now in its fourth month and when phoning into report missed bin collections it can take 10-20 minutes and the bins still do not get collected. He asked when are NHDC going to get their waste and recycling services working.

Cllr SC responded to say Facebook had been updated within the past hour and a document has been released from NHDC which contains details about the waste services and how they are yet to see improvements. Within the document it explains all of the problems which have occurred. Cllr SC is unsure about a resolution.

Cllr ED met with the Deputy Chief Executive and explained that there have been a lot of problems occurring in the background which suggest reasons why the service has not been working. Officers have confirmed that they are working to get the situation fixed; however there is a time lapse as there has been an influx of emails and there is a backlog to August. Urbaser are still understaffed and currently relying on agency staff, but their data map has improved.

Cllr SH has had bins missed and has reported this at 4pm on a Friday online via NHDC and his bins have been collected at 7am the next morning. Cllr SH advises to use the NHDC online system as it is a very quick service.

Cllr JB read a story on social media, a FOI request which stated that NHDC are not properly in contract with Urbaser, so therefore they can't break the contract.

Cllr IA added that when asking about how much we are spending NHDC's Legal Department told him that it is commercially sensitive information.

Cllr SC is in favour of extending the service to those who have paid, but was told it would cost £90,000 to extend the service. This is the best indication on the cost.

BW argued some flats and apartments didn't receive a letter and when you leave your bins out the Urbaser team are unaware of who has paid as they don't have this information with them, compared with Hatfield who have stickers on their bins.

Cllr ED agrees, what service have NHDC put in place so you know who has paid. Now there are residents who haven't paid and are getting their bins emptied.

Cllr PC mentioned that the papers which are part of the scrutiny meeting are available online. The meeting with the Chief Executive suggested there is legal undertaking with Urbaser, and they are still dealing with the issue which is why information about the contract cannot be made public. At the portfolio meeting last Friday cases were put forward. The other part of the contract is the litter bins in the Town Centre. The bins over the weekend at the Hitchin Food Festival were not collected.

Cllr MSH added that at the Council meeting last Thursday Labour and the Liberal Democrats voted for a contingency plan; however the Conservatives were not in favour.

Cllr SH suggested that the Conservatives are assured that NHDC already have a contingency plan in place.

## 2. Litter bins

KH wished to discuss the litter which was not collected after the Food and Drink Festival in Hitchin last weekend. Companies pay for litter to be collected after the event; however Churchyard bins were left overflowed. The waste bins in Bancroft are

the responsibility of John O'Connor's and the Town Centre bins are part of the Urbaser contract. On behalf of Rachel Campbell can Urbaser just collect the overflowing waste even if it is not in their contract?

Cllr SH suggested that the rota could be adapted but this is to be raised with Vaughan Watson, Head of Leisure & Environmental Services at NHDC; if Urbaser know there is a food festival they could alter the system to ensure the bins are emptied.

Tom Hardy pointed out that the old contractor Veolia had the capacity to provide a large bin on the event for an extra fee. TH was told that Urbaser do not have the capacity to do this. This means they have to use a private company.

BW added that at St George's playing field there is only one small bin which gets overfilled quickly. There needs to be more bins provided, this would reduce litter on Bedford Rd. There had been a lot of glass left on Bedford Rd which no one had cleared up, BW kindly brushed this up.

**ACTION: Vaughan Watson to be informed**

### **3. Litter pick day**

EC has organised a litter pick day which is to take place on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> October 10-12pm and would like to invite all of the Councillors. If there is a patch in a Councillor's ward that needs tackled then let EC know. EC has linked up with Rachel Campbell and they will be doing a big litter hunt and a little treasure hunt. They are hoping to recruit 90 – 100 volunteers. All information can be found online on the Hitchin Forum website. <https://www.hitchinforum.org.uk/>

KH added that the pavements are in a state and has asked if the cleaning of the streets could go into the Urbaser contract once a month.

### **4. Hitchin Station**

KH is meeting with National Rail and the MP on the 28<sup>th</sup> September. There is vacant land and KH would like to be able to do something. Drone photography of the vacant area is available to look at in the Hitchin Town Centre office.

Cllr SH asked the interest received from NHDC.

KH stated that NHDC planning would be interested and the Chief Executive did express an interest.

### **5. Market Square Corn Exchange**

CD raised his concern about the top of the building, there appears to be missing wood that has fallen. This could be deemed dangerous for passer-by's. It is a listed building and should be reserved.

Claire Morgan from the Communities Team stated that a resident has emailed into NHDC to raise this matter. Building control has been actioned to look into it.

### **6. Churchgate**

RD suggested that the Council have approved in principle but there hasn't been a public consultation and there seems like there is no intention to hold one. In the document it states that there should be a consultation before a decision is made. Cllr IA responded to say he was unsure if there would be a public consultation.

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Cllr MSH added there was a consultation in the summer when the public were invited to answer the questionnaire.

RD doesn't think a survey is a consultation

Cllr JB and Cllr SC added that they are continuing to discuss the plans and they have not seen a proposal.

Cllr ED explained that what was agreed was negotiation to potentially do something; it is in the pre consultation phase. Once a consultation phase is triggered NHDC will do something.

**NB:** Resolution in regard to Churchgate agreed at NHDC meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2018

RESOLVED:

(1) That the principle of a joint venture regeneration of the Churchgate Centre, with the Council as funder of the regeneration, be supported;

(2) That the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer, the Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Finance and IT, be authorised to progress negotiations with Shearer Property Group on the terms of a potential joint venture regeneration of the Churchgate Centre, subject to Full Council's final approval of the terms of any proposal; and

(3) That the proposal to allow the contract for the management of Hitchin Market to expire and for the market to be managed in-house, subject to Cabinet's approval, be noted.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To progress the potential regeneration of the Churchgate Shopping Centre in Hitchin.

7. Cllr JB announced that former Councillor Lawrence Oliver recently had a serious stroke 4 weeks ago and has now been moved to Danesbury rehabilitation centre. The Hitchin Councillors and those present at the Town Talk expressed their regards and sent their best wishes.
8. CP raised questions about adopted land at the end of William Rd linking with Cambridge Rd. The land once was County Council land. The land is now un-adopted and needs to be adopted as the vegetation on this land needs attending to.  
Cllr ED is going to investigate  
CP added that the pavement is cracked and unsafe  
Cllr SH stated that you can process paperwork online with regards to adopting land  
**ACTION: Cllr ED to investigate**
9. A member of the audience wished to complain about the rubbish that is occurring in the car park behind Quaker meeting house to the rear of the Lairage Multi-storey car park. The litter is behind a security fence which is difficult to access.  
Cllr SC is aware and is currently chasing it up.
10. BF asked to what extent Councillors are worried about the closure of Hitchin Police Station.

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Cllr JB responded that a press release last Thursday from the Fire Service stated that the Police Crime Commissioner is staying with the County Council which means still being in the frame of being involved in the debates.

Cllr IA added that the closure of the Job Centre and Tax Office in Hitchin was not acceptable and is concerned about the public buildings closing in Hitchin.

Cllr SC suggested that the possibility of land in Hitchin looking attractable

Cllr SH stated that the Police Station has been closed for a number of years

Cllr SC responded to say that there are still a lot of functions of the Police Station.

Meeting closed at 19.15