

Hitchin Town Talk

Tuesday 12 October 2021 6:30pm – 7:15pm

Present:

IA Councillor Ian Albert
JB Councillor Judi Billing MBE
VB Councillor Val Bryant
PC Councillor Paul Clark
EDH Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg
SH Councillor Simon Harwood
KH Councillor Keith Hoskins MBE
MH Councillor Mike Hughson
MN Councillor Nigel Mason
RT Councillor Richard Thake

DP Danny Pearson NHC Officer
JL James Lovegrove NHC Officer
SE Simon Ellis NHC Officer
CR Christopher Robson NHC Officer

Apologies:

Councillor Clare Billing, Councillor Sam Collins, Councillor Kay Tart, Cllr David Barnard

Please Note: Heavy rain fell before the Town Talk which would have put off a few members of the public.

Cllr IA welcomed everyone into the meeting. He asked residents if there were any topics they would like to raise. As there were no responses, Cllr IA opened the floor to Councillors to raise any queries from their constituents.

Cllr SH: Noted that the road works at the Stevenage Road/ Park Way roundabout (Three Moorhens' roundabout) were progressing nicely and that the difference in the smooth road surface was welcome.

Several Councillors asked if it would be a good idea to make the Town Talks virtual again. Would the Town Talk and Committee meeting be able to take place on separate evenings?

If the Hitchin Town Talks were separated from the Hitchin Committee evenings then could the Hitchin Town Talk meetings be held slightly later – 7:30pm for an hour?

DP: This month's Letchworth Town Talk and Committee meeting had been separated for October.

Cllr IA: We can investigate this.

Anni Sander: Is there any news on the reopening of Charnwood House? What are the next steps? How will the results of the questionnaires be shown?

Cllr IA: We were very pleased that we had over 180 responses to the recent public questionnaire and that we had over 250 members of the public visited Charnwood House over the two NHC Open Days. There was overwhelming support for Charnwood to be a Community Hub. As for the next steps, we will be making a referral to the cabinet. We aren't ruling anything out and one of the main aims for the future of Charnwood is sustainability.

Cllr JB: Added that she was delighted with how the Open Days went and there was a lot of enthusiastic people their sharing their ideas for the building.

Cllr NM: Added that it was interesting to meet one of the Moss family there.

Cllr IA: We are actively seeking to see if the building can be used in any sort of way before any major refurbishment. We are working with NHC Officers. Again, we will keep everyone update as soon as we know. We know that there is a lot of interest in the future of this building, and we are keen to see it working for the community. It is what the Moss family want.

Cllr SH: It's a shame we aren't talking with Hertfordshire County Council, who run Hitchin library in the building next to Charnwood. Couldn't we treat it as a whole building working with them?

Cllr JB: Mentioned that this has been asked before, but HCC showed little to no interest.

Anni Sander: Said that a Repair Café would work well there. Hitchin Hackspace doesn't have enough room currently and Charnwood would be the perfect venue to host such a Repair Café.

Cllr IA: Reminded people in attendance that Charnwood House was going to be discussed again at length at the Committee Meeting.

Anni Sander: Asked what refurbishment plans there were for Hitchin Highstreet.

Cllr PC: A recent survey has shown that 78% of people wish for the Highstreet to be pedestrianised. They are working on plans in line with the results from this survey.

Cllr JB: The area/ road between HSBC and Gatward's Jewellers needs work and money for any works. It is understood that the drainage there is a problem that will need to be dealt with.

Cllr PC: The town centre is being looked at as there are problems with tarmac and the drains. Broken paving slabs also need to be looked at.

Anni Sander: Is cycling allowed?

Cllr PC: No – Questions need to be asked. It will be clarified.

Cllr MH: Where are we with the secondary entrance to Hitchin train station?

Cllr IA: MP Bim Afolami is going to arrange another meeting with Network Rail. This should take place towards the end of November.

Bernard Eddleston: When will the NHC Local Plan be finished/ ready?

Cllr PC: We have been told November 2021. We are continuing to press for this.

Cllr IA closed the meeting

The next Town Talk will take place on Tuesday 30th November 2021 6:30pm – 7:15pm followed by Hitchin Committee at 7:30pm.

Venue: Tilehouse Street Baptist Church, Upper Tilehouse St, Hitchin SG5 2EE