**Hitchin Town Talk**

**Tuesday 29September 2020 6pm**

**Present:**

**MSH** Cllr Martin Stears-Handscomb

**SH** Cllr Simon Harwood

**IA** Cllr Ian Albert

**SC** Cllr Sam Collins

**KH** Cllr Keith Hoskins

**PC**  Cllr Paul Clark

**VB** Cllr Val Bryant

**CB** Cllr Clare Billing

**Apologies:**

Cllr David Barnard

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 PC: There are roadworks at top of Hermitage Road which is causing problems on the approach as there are no warnings about them on Walsworth Road.

Cllr SC: has spoken to Highways, they said they are changing the pedestrian crossings.

Cllr SC to update.

Cllr SH: noted that on the Highways website it says they are changing the traffic light settings.

Gordan Mcphail: Is there any news on the North Hertfordshire College development?

Cllr EDH: Some plans have been changed, perhaps fewer affordable homes. Cllr Kay Tart has been working more closely on this. Planning has been moving slowly.

Gordan Mcphail: Any news on St. Michael’s Road cycle routes?

Cllr PC: The HCC cycle route scheme has been pulled at present. There is a possibility for parking bays to be introduced to make the cycle route safer.

Neil Dodds: It seems that there is a reduction in affordable homes on new developments. On the North Herts College development, only 17 out of 116 proposed homes are affordable.

Cllr PC: ‘Affordable’ is only 20% off the usual price which is still not affordable for young people or first times buyers. Perhaps the Council should start building social housing again so there is an increased amount.

Cllr MSH: A constant frustration that NHDC encounter with developers is that they say there is a problem with the viability of a scheme which means they need to lower amount of affordable housing. Unfortunately, the government’s current planning legislation doesn’t prioritise affordable housing but NHDC does and always will.

Margaret Rollason: What happened to money gained when you sold the council houses?

Cllr MSH: Capital receipts for this have been spent on other council projects. Unfortunately, this was some time ago now.

Mary Marshall: Could we look into putting stickers with ‘what 3 words’ locations on to bins in the middle of large parks? This would make it easier would waste teams to locate them when there is an issue reported.

Cllr EDH: Certainly, something for us to investigate, this could be helpful to both Urbaser and John O’Connor teams.

Cllr CB: There have been a few larger bins installed on the field near the new park on Westmill, perhaps QR codes could work as a lot of people have QR scanning apps on their phone due to Covid.

Shirley Goldsmith: What’s happening with the old museum building – Charnwood?

Cllr KH: Charnwood Community Group have now sent a proposal for its use to NHDC. It is NHDC’s wish that this building should be for community use and NHDC will need to do the necessary renovations to the building. NHDC will also need to consult the wider public to see if there are any others interested in its use.

Cllr SH: Has the building been declared surplus?

Cllr MSH: No. Not at this stage.

Cllr SH: Perhaps could put in a Lottery Grant Bid for use of this.

Cllr KH: to send Cllr SH proposed plans.

Cllr SH: We are seeing increased levels of vandalism on King George 5th playing fields, is this representative Hitchin wide?

Cllr SC: It is something that has been raised with the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee because and Anti - Social Behaviour is seen as having risk implications to NHDC. Cllr SC to update on this.

Jacob Thorburn: Any update on the regeneration of Churchgate?

Cllr KH: It is still NHDC’s aim to purchase the lease on Churchgate. NHDC are in early negotiations with Hammersmatch on this.

Cllr IA: It is very much NHDC’s aspiration to see what can be done.

Cllr KH: Raised the issue of banning heavy goods vehicles in the town centre. There have been a lot of issues with lorries trying to turn around at the junction of Bucklesbury and Tilehouse Street and there have been two accidents in the last week as they can’t get through.

Cllr SH: I believe TRO’s and ANPR’S need to be in place.

Cllr SC: Restrictions are not the issue; enforcement is the issue as Police don’t have the resources to enforce. ANPR could be a solution.

Cllr KH: How can we move this forward?

Cllr IA: Can take forward to Cllr Derrick Ashley

Cllr SH: TRO’s are NHDC’s responsibility.

Cllr PC: But NHDC are not responsible for their enforcement, these two things need to be joint up.

Dave Miller: What deliveries are the lorries making?

Cllr KH: Mainly food and drink.

Dave Miller: Could shops be instructed to use smaller vehicles by the BID?

Cllr SC: Some lorries are using Hitchin as a through route, but some need to deliver to businesses in our town. Perhaps Tom Hardy could speak to businesses and encourage them to use smaller vehicles.

Margaret Rollason: In the Arcade in Letchworth, there is a division to mark LH side and RH side walking. Could we have that in our Arcade in Hitchin?

Cllr KH: It is reliant on people adhering to it. Both pedestrian and vehicle access need a wider discussion. But closure of High Street on weekdays has been a success.

Gordan MCphail: Traffic issues. People are often illegally parking on Nightingale Road for takeaways. This causes mass issues in rush hour.

Cllr PC to speak to John Charterhouse on this.

Cllr VB: Has recently visited shop owners on Nightingale Road but the issue is that there is no parking available nearby. Shop owners don’t park outside, it does seem to be customers.

Cllr IA: Members can have discussions with traffic enforcement officers at NHDC to increase their rounds in problem areas.

Cllr SH: Told attendees about a new local housing development. There is currently a consultation process open about the housing development at the website below. Cllr SH encouraged all residents to have their say. <https://poundfields.com/>

Neil Dodds: Pound fields on St Ippolyts Road. Affordable housing seems to be 40% there.

Nicky Clarke: Has been having conversations about this with other local residents. There seems to be lots of concrete and not much green.

Cllr SH: Looking at the plans, the developer seems to be covering the green credentials towards the back of site, but I am by no means expressing my support. Now is the time for residents to submit their comments on the website.

Cllr PC: Planning Committee often support protecting trees and replace one loss with two or three newly planted trees.

Cllr SH: Another field on Lucas Lane was identified recently to develop and remove trees. Councillors acted quickly and put in tree preservation orders to save it and it worked.

Nicky Clarke: What influence do we have on the sustainability of future developments?

Cllr SC: We are working on putting stricter regulations on statutory planning documents. Councillors would like to see BREAM regulations to be introduced to the Local Plan.

Cllr SC to update at later date.

Cllr PC: NHDC are looking into Carbon Neutral Homes but will have to take carbon off-setting into consideration. We are also pushing for better cycle routes and pathways to link developments to encourage greener commuting across the town.

**Cllr IA: mentioned that there will be a Special Hitchin Town Talk on Monday 19 October from 19:00 – 20:30 via Zoom. This will be focused on how the arts can recover from the pandemic. Key representatives from Arts organisations across the District have been invited to present and members of the public are welcome to attend and observe.**

Cllr IA closed the meeting at 7:02pm.

**The next Town Talk will take place on Tuesday 1 December from 18:00 – 19:00 followed by Hitchin Committee at 19:30. Both will take place virtually.**