

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL



9 June 2025

Our Ref Hitchin Community Forum 17 June 2025
Contact. Community and Partnerships Team
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To: Members of the Area Forum: Councillors Ian Albert (Chair), Clare Billing (Vice-Chair), Val Bryant, Jon Clayden, Sam Collins, Elizabeth Dennis, Keith Hoskins MBE, Chris Lucas, Nigel Mason, Dave Winstanley, Daniel Wright-Mason and Donna Wright

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN OF A

MEETING OF THE HITCHIN COMMUNITY FORUM

to be held in the

HITCHIN TOWN HALL, BRAND STREET, HITCHIN, SG5 1HX

On

TUESDAY, 17TH JUNE, 2025 AT 7.30 PM

Yours sincerely,

Jeanette Thompson
Director – Governance

****MEMBERS PLEASE ENSURE THAT YOU DOWNLOAD ALL AGENDAS AND REPORTS VIA THE MOD.GOV APPLICATION ON YOUR TABLET BEFORE ATTENDING THE MEETING****

Agenda **Part I**

Item		Page
1.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	
2.	CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS Members are reminded that any declarations of interest in respect of any business set out in the agenda, should be declared as either a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or Declarable Interest and are required to notify the Chair of the nature of any interest declared at the commencement of the relevant item on the agenda. Members declaring a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest must withdraw from the meeting for the duration of the item. Members declaring a Declarable Interest, wishing to exercise a 'Councillor Speaking Right', must declare this at the same time as the interest, move to the public area before speaking to the item and then must leave the room before the debate and vote.	
3.	HITCHIN BID UPDATE The Chair will read out a written update on behalf of the Hitchin BID team.	
4.	PUBLIC PRESENTATION - GRANT APPLICATIONS To consider a community grant application for recommendation to the Executive Member for Community and Partnerships.	(Pages 5 - 14)
5.	HIGHOVER FARM DEVELOPMENT UPDATE AND Q&A An update on the Highover Farm Development by the Developers followed by Q&A. Exhibition boards will be available to view before the meeting starts from 7pm. Information is also available through their website Land at Highover Farm, Hitchin from Barratt Redrow and David Wilson Homes .	
6.	BIN COLLECTIONS: WHAT'S CHANGING Presentation and Q&A from a council representative on the new bin deliveries. Information on the bin collection service changes can be found at Bin collection service changes North Herts Council .	
7.	COMMUNITY UPDATE To provide the Forum with an update to ensure Members are kept informed of the work of the Community and Partnerships Team.	
8.	WARD MATTERS & OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS To receive any verbal reports from Members and questions from members of	(Pages 15 - 16)

the public regarding Ward matters and Outside Organisations.

9. FUTURE COMMUNITY FORUMS
To discuss topics for future meetings.

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REPORT (FOR RECOMMENDATION & NOTING BY COMMUNITY FORUM)

HITCHIN COMMUNITY FORUM DATE 17 JUNE 2025

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

SERVICE DIRECTORATE: GOVERNANCE

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To advise the Community Forum on the current expenditure and balances of the Community Grant budget.
- 1.2 To bring to the Forum's attention details of recent requests received for Community grant funding, made by community groups and local organisations.
- 1.3 To enable Forum Members to make recommendations to the Executive Member for Governance (formally Community & Partnerships) on grant applications.
- 1.4 To advise the Forum of the activities and schemes with which Community & Partnerships officers have been involved in and some important community-based activities that will take place during the next few months.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

THAT THE COMMUNITY FORUM:

- 2.1 Considers and notes the information within this report.
- 2.2 Makes recommendations to the Executive Member for Governance (formerly Community & Partnerships) on the grant applications detailed below.
- 2.3 Bubble Works Run Community - **£651** towards running activities and safeguarding costs

3. BACKGROUND/ RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 The Community Grant budget for Hitchin Community Forum 2025/26 is **£19,952**.
- 3.2 No Community grant payments have been made to date for the financial year 2025/26.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Following the decision of Full Council on 18 April 2023, a Community Forum shall consider applications for community grants in its area and make recommendations to the Executive Member for Community & Partnerships (now Governance) on them. The Executive Member has delegated authority to make these Executive decisions under section 14.6.8(b)((ii)A 5 of the constitution, in consultation with the Service Director: Governance. That decision will be subject to a 5 clear working day call-in period, following publication in the Members Information Service (MIS) and on the Council's website.

- 4.2 Other issues raised in this report are for information and noting and therefore no direct legal implications arise.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 As outlined in Appendix 1 and under item 3.1 the Community Grant budget available is **£19,952**.
- 5.2 The total amount of funding requested for this meeting is **£651**.
- 5.3 If the application outlined in Appendix 2 is recommended by the Forum and subsequently approved by the Executive Member for Governance (formerly Community & Partnerships), there would be **£19,301** available for Community Grants for the remainder of the 2025-2026 financial year.

6. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Good risk management supports and enhances the decision-making process, increasing the likelihood of the Council meeting its objectives and enabling it to respond quickly and effectively to change. When taking decisions, risks and opportunities must be considered.
- 6.2 There are no relevant risk entries that have been recorded on Ideagen Risk Management, the Council's performance and risk system. Individual events should have their own risk assessments in place to mitigate any health and safety issues. Whenever a request for grant funding for equipment is received, the recipient of the funding will be advised to obtain insurance for the item to avoid a repeat request for funding in the event of the equipment being stolen or damaged. There are no pertinent risk implications for the Authority associated with any items within this report.

7. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 7.2 Community Grant funds are awarded to community groups that clearly demonstrate positive impact on the community and wider environment. The projects outlined in this report seek to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

8. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Social Value Act and "go local" policy do not apply to the matters contained within this report, as there are no recommendations on procurement.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to this report.

10. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The activities of the Community & Partnerships team are covered by existing budgets.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 Terms of Reference for Community Forums, Section 9 of the Council Constitution updated April 2024.

11.2 Community Grants Criteria Policy March 2025.

12. APPENDICES

12.1 Appendix 1. Hitchin Grant Budget 25-26

12.2 Appendix 2. Bubble Works Run Community

12.3 Appendix 3. Community Updates

13. CONTACT OFFICERS

13.1 Author

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SUMMARY FINANCIAL POSITION 2025/26

<u>Original Budget</u> <u>2025/26</u>	<u>Carry Forward</u> <u>Budget 2024/25</u>	<u>Total Funding</u> <u>2025/26</u>	<u>Grants</u> <u>Allocated</u>	<u>Unallocated</u> <u>Budget</u>
£18,900	£1,052	£19,952	£0	£19,952

<u>Project</u>	<u>Forum Date</u>	<u>Grant Allocated</u>
TOTAL HITCHIN COMMUNITY FORUM		£0

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Appendix 2: Bubble Works Run Community


=Document Control:

Version	Issue Date	Changes
1.0	NA	First Draft (BE)

Reference	6116			
Name of Organisation	Bubble Works Run Community			
Organisation Type	Club			
Ward	Various			
Project Type	Active			
Green option considered?	N/A			
NHC Councillor involvement that may constitute a conflict of interest	None known			
Previous financial support within six years	No			
Documentation reviewed and approved*	Safeguarding	Yes	Accounts	Yes
	Demonstrates clear governance	Yes		
Total applied for	£651	Total project cost	£1,051	
Officer Summary				
<p>Bubble Works Run Community is a running club founded on being a social, inclusive and fun group that brings people of all capabilities together around sport and specifically running. The membership is completely free and includes over 500 members, with at least 90% based in Hitchin.</p> <p>They are applying for funding to go towards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cost of hiring Ridlins Athletics Track in Stevenage for two separate sessions, each lasting two hours - £86 an hour • Coach travel to attend a half marathon race in Cambridge – for runners and supporters - £650 • Safeguarding and Welfare Officer Course - £35 • DBS check for Welfare Officer - £21.50 <p>The club have received enquiries from members for track running days. Track running provides a safe, structured and high-quality surface for runners of all abilities. This is especially needed in darker months, when running on streets can be daunting, particularly for lesser experienced runners.</p> <p>Providing coach travel for members and supporters promotes accessibility to take part in the half marathon.</p> <p>The club are contributing £400 towards costs through fundraising.</p>				

*Funding will only be released on receipt and approval of all supporting documentation

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Districtwide Community Updates
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Community Grants Policy was updated in March 2025. Some changes to be aware of include changes to the minimum amount that can be applied for, the maximum amount that can be applied for and that Business Improvement Districts (BID's) can no longer apply as they have access to other funds via UKSPF. Please read the criteria in full on the NHC grants webpage Community grants North Herts Council.• Co-ordinating various local and district wide Network Groups including Youth Action, Food Provision, Arts and Culture and Green and Growing Group.• Coordinating voluntary support response to Asylum Seekers based in North Herts.• Continuing to facilitate NHC Councillors' Community Surgeries.• Sharing and disseminating information on social media and to mailing lists, keeping in touch with the community, voluntary, statutory, and non-statutory agencies.
Area Community Updates
<p>The Community Partnerships Officer Update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attended Walsworth Community Centre's re-opening showcase event. After months of repairs following flooding from last year, they are now fully re-opened.• Attended Hitchin Youth Allotment's celebration event. They were awarded £12,225 from North Herts Council's Prosperity Fund in 2024 towards expanding their offer. Below is a photograph of their new greenhouse. <div data-bbox="507 1151 1177 1572"></div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• We held our first in-person Arts and Culture Network meeting, which was attended by 15 members from across North Herts. This included Hitchin Library, British Schools Museum and North Herts Museum. Following positive feedback, we plan to hold the next one in-person in September.

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Updates from North Herts Council's Enterprise and Estate Teams

Churchgate Regeneration Project Update

The Project Board have held three workshops to discuss potential uses for the site and the financial feasibility of various options available to the Council

The feasibility is being led by consultants Lambert Smith Hampton, as we continue to work alongside them throughout the due diligence phase of this project

Some members of the Project team attended 'UKREiiF' in Leeds 21st – 23rd May. UKREiiF is the UK Real Estate and Investment Forum and is a great opportunity/platform for Councils to showcase their portfolios of real estate opportunities within their towns/boroughs. The event is also attended by hundreds of developers, retailers, house builders, investment companies etc. The team attended alongside 'Invest Hertfordshire' – which makes up most of the Councils in the County, working together to showcase their opportunities

The purpose of attending the event was to demonstrate the work done so far on the Regeneration Project for Churchgate, sharing the public consultation results as well as the technical findings. This enabled developers to have a better understanding of what the Council wish to deliver on the site – and continues to create momentum in the lead up to any Procurement exercise we may wish to do in the Autumn

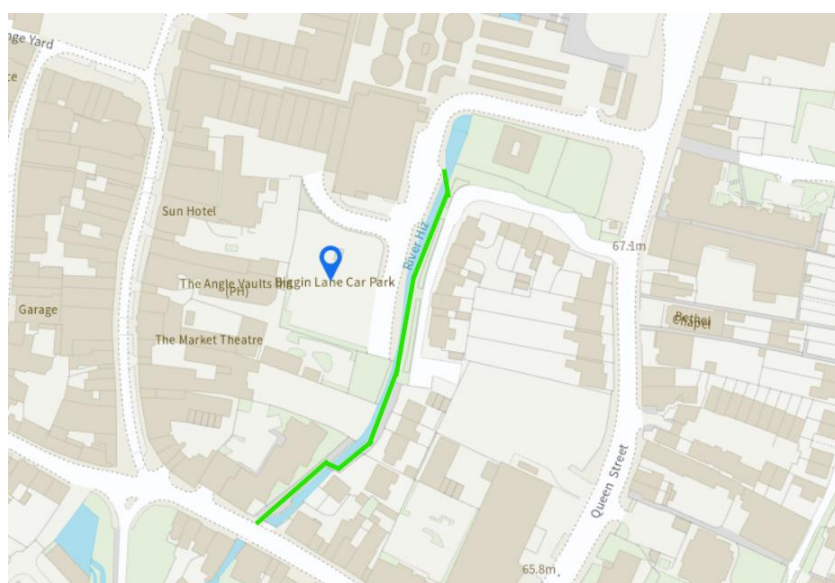
We have been using our comms channels (namely social media) to share Churchgate updates and findings. Recently we filmed and posted two videos – one of the Leader of the Council, Daniel Allen, talking about the importance of our five development principles, and the other with an interview from Steve Norris at Lambert Smith Hampton and Service Director of Enterprise Steve Crowley. This video talks about the steps we have taken so far, and why they are so crucial to our success.

We are now focusing on taking a report to Full Council that will outline a top level option and preferred route for the project.

Churchgate Shopping Centre Management

The new managing agents, Praxis Property Management, are now actively onboard with the day-to-day management of the centre. They are building good relationships with the tenants with an improved presence at the centre and ensuring compliance and day to day management aspects are actioned. There have been recent new lettings of Unit 11 and 17 which are a good addition to the centre. Deep cleaning of the walkway was completed a few weeks ago, and repair and decoration of the canopies is nearing completion and has made a significant improvement. By the time of the Forum meeting the hanging baskets and planters should be in place. We are looking at the potential to improve signage and benches in the walkway too. Praxis are working closely with Visit Hitchin regarding events this year that we can collaborate on.

Riverside Walk – This remains within the Responsible Growth priority of the Council Plan with the aim of delivering the walkway between Bridge Street and Biggin Lane to increase footfall in this part of the town centre. Following the results of a topographical survey of the proposed route, an outline proposal has now been prepared by an external firm of consultant engineers and there was a recent site visit with Executive Members and the Leader. Preliminary indications are that the optimum route of the Riverside Walk will follow the route approximately shown in green below.



The route will involve the construction of a new footbridge over the Hiz near to the Biggin Lane car park. Consultation is underway with the Environment Agency to enable the design of the proposed bridge to be finalised and with Herts County Council Highways for linking with existing footpaths. Works are planned to repair the walkway surface and clear the river to enable inspection of the retaining walls. The path will need to be for the use of pedestrians only (and not mounted cyclists) due to the width of the existing walkway adjacent to Jill Gray Place. Once more detail is available plans will be shared more widely. There are a number of stages to delivery of this project including outline and detailed design, consultation with key stakeholders, planning and conservation area consents, Highway and Environment Agency consents, tender for the works and delivery. The target is to seek completion this financial year.

Charnwood House – The Council remain committed to delivering its ambition to revitalise Charnwood House for the benefit of Hitchin and the wider district. As advised, previous work and marketing by external agents did not lead to a letting or other arrangement to bring it into suitable use for various reasons. Officers are undertaking a review of the work done to date and the reports on the building, and will be bringing forward options for Executive Members to confirm the next steps. Whilst Charnwood House is not formally on the market at present pending the outcome of this work, we are maintaining a list of organisations and groups who have expressed an interest and they will be informed of next steps.

The Council has a web page for the property remains at [Charnwood House | North Herts Council \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](http://north-herts.gov.uk) which is periodically updated and includes frequently asked questions.