

**NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**



8 September 2025

Our Ref    Hitchin Community Forum 16 September 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, 16TH SEPTEMBER, 2025 AT 7.00 PM**

Yours sincerely,

Isabelle Alajooz  
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**

<b>Item</b>		<b>Page</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b>	
<b>2.</b>	<b>CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS</b> 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.	
<b>3.</b>	<b>TOWN TALK</b> Update on the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) for Queen Street hub scheme from Jeff Clayton, Strategy & Programme Manager for Highways Implementation, Hertfordshire County Council. Followed by Q&A.  Open Q&A session – questions will be invited from the floor for the Hitchin Community Forum Councillors.	
<b>4.</b>	<b>HITCHIN BID UPDATE</b> To receive a verbal update from the Hitchin BID on their work in Hitchin town centre.	
<b>5.</b>	<b>PUBLIC PRESENTATION - GRANT APPLICATIONS</b> To consider community grant applications for recommendation to the Executive Member for Governance.	(Pages 5 - 14)
<b>6.</b>	<b>PRESENTATION - LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION</b> Presentation and Q&A on Local Government Reorganisation.	(Pages 15 - 16)
	Information on the Local Government Reorganisation can be found in the links below. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Help shape Hertfordshire's future - have your say on changes to local government   North Herts Council</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation   North Herts Council</a></li></ul>	

- 7. COMMUNITY UPDATE** (Pages 17 - 18)  
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** (Pages 19 - 20)  
To receive any verbal reports from Members and members of 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 16 SEPTEMBER 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), the Leader 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 on the grant applications detailed below.
- 2.3 Hitchin Belles Football Club - **£1,803** towards training and workshops for Wellbeing Volunteers and Coaches.
- 2.4 Green Care at Norton CIC - **£945** towards growing materials and equipment to increase capacity to grow fruit and vegetables for Hitchin Pantry.

#### 3. BACKGROUND/ RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 The Community Grant budget for Hitchin Community Forum 2025/26 is **£19,952**.
- 3.2 Community grant payments totalling **£651** have been made to date, as itemised in Appendix 1.
- 3.3 The remaining budget available for community grants for the Hitchin area for 2025/26 therefore stands at **£19,301**.

#### 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 is the Leader of the Council and has delegated authority to make these Executive decisions under section 14.6.9(b)(iii)A 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 The Terms of Reference of the Community Forum can be found in Section 9 of the constitution which states that the forum will '*consider and act as an advisory body to the relevant Executive Member responsible for grants who approves these (in consultation with the relevant Director)*'.
- 4.3 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 3.3 the Community Grant budget available is **£19,301**.
- 5.2 The total amount of funding requested for this meeting is **£2,748**.
- 5.3 If the applications outlined in Appendices 2 and 3 are recommended by the Forum and subsequently approved by the Executive Member for Governance there would be **£16,553** available for Community Grants for the remainder of the 2025-2026 financial year.
- 5.4 The application outlined in Appendix 3 has been determined to be a Subsidy under the Subsidy Control Act as there is a market for selling fruit and vegetables. The applicants have confirmed that the value of grants that they have and will receive means that the proposed payment can be treated as Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) under the Act. The Council will ensure that it carries out the necessary steps for the payment to be treated as MFA, but ultimate responsibility is with the applicant.

## **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 positive environmental implications associated with Green Care at Norton’s grant application. They will be establishing more and larger ‘no dig’ growing beds, which is a technique which helps improve soil health. They will also be growing local produce which helps reduce carbon emissions, lower energy consumption and minimise food waste.

## **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 May 2024.
- 11.2 Community Grants Criteria Policy March 2025.

## **12. APPENDICES**

- 12.1 Appendix 1. Hitchin Grant Budget 25-26
- 12.2 Appendix 2. Hitchin Belles Football Club
- 12.3 Appendix 3. Green Care at Norton CIC
- 12.4 Appendix 4. 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	£651	£19,301

## FUNDED PROJECTS

<u>Project</u>	<u>Forum Date</u>	<u>Grant Allocated</u>
<b>Bubble Works Run Community -</b> running activities and safeguarding costs	25th June 2025	£651
<b>TOTAL HITCHIN COMMUNITY FORUM</b>		<b>£651</b>

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## =Document Control:

Version	Issue Date	Changes
1.0	NA	First Draft (BE)

Reference	6134			
Name of Organisation	Hitchin Belles Football Club			
Organisation Type	Club			
Ward	Hitchin Bearton			
Project Type	Active / Youth			
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	£1,803	Total project cost		£2,303

## Officer Summary

Hitchin Belles Football Club (HBFC) is the largest grassroots girls football club in the country, with nearly 300 of their players from Hitchin - [Hitchin Belles FC – The Biggest All-Female Football Club in the UK](#).

In 2024, HBFC launched a wellbeing team to support players and coaches on and off the field, offering weekly guidance on menstrual health, nutrition, mental wellbeing, and injury prevention. To strengthen this commitment, they are seeking funding to train wellbeing volunteers and coaches. The proposed courses are outlined below.

[The Female Body - Guided Coaching Programme - The Well HQ : The Well HQ](#)

- £569 per person for 2 wellbeing volunteers
- Volunteers will cascade training to all others, equipping them to support female athletes with strategies tailored to their physiology

[ADD-vance Understanding ADHD/Autistic Children and Young People](#)

- Two 2-hour online workshops at £375 each plus £25 bespoke supplement per workshop
- This course will be open to all their volunteers which is approximately 150

[GRIT](#) - Growing Resilience in Teens: Coaches workshops

- £365 for a series of four 90-minute workshops
- Covers support systems, mindset growth, physical & mental health, my rules and values. Coaches can then implement its principles while working with young people
- This course will be open to all their volunteers which is approximately 150

£500 has been raised through sponsorship from Raymond James and Hitchin Digital.

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## Appendix 3: Green Care at Norton CIC

### =Document Control:

Version	Issue Date	Changes
1.0	NA	First Draft (BE)

Reference	6135													
Name of Organisation	Green Care at Norton CIC													
Organisation Type	Community Interest Company													
Ward	Various in Hitchin													
Project Type	Social and therapeutic horticulture													
Green option considered?	They will be establishing 'no dig' growing beds, which helps improve soil health. Growing local produce helps reduce carbon emissions, lower energy consumption and minimise food waste.													
NHC Councillor involvement that may constitute a conflict of interest	None known													
Previous financial support within six years	From NHPF £19,775 in October 2024 towards a transit van From Letchworth Forum: £613 in Jan 2024 £898 in March 2023 £1,050 in June 2022 In 2020 - £400 in Dec, £2,500 in June, £2,052 in March													
Documentation reviewed and approved*	Safeguarding	Yes	Accounts	Yes										
	Demonstrates clear governance	Yes												
Total applied for	£945	Total project cost	£1,045											
Officer Summary														
<p><a href="#">Green Care at Norton (GCAN)</a> supports adults facing loneliness, unemployment, or social exclusion. Participants grow food and flowers alongside volunteers, building confidence, purpose, and community. This <a href="#">video</a> highlights the impact of their work.</p> <p>Since winning the North Herts Community Heroes Green Award 2025, GCAN have formed a partnership with <a href="#">Hitchin Pantry</a> to supply them with high quality organically grown fruit and vegetables for their clients. Before this partnership, Hitchin Pantry were making up for their shortfall of fresh produce by purchasing it from Sainsbury's. GCAN produce is up to 60% cheaper than Sainsbury's and often higher quality.</p> <p>At least 100 families from Hitchin go to Hitchin Pantry. GCAN are seeking funding to expand their fruit and vegetable production at Standalone Farm, focusing on growing produce needed by Hitchin Pantry, such as aubergines, garlic, squash, and okra. They aim to achieve this by creating larger 'no dig' beds and improving soil quality.</p> <p>Funding will cover essential growing materials and equipment:</p> <table><tr><td>2 tons of Cambridgeshire Fen soil and 2 tons of compost</td><td>£414.15</td></tr><tr><td>Professional Propagation trays x20</td><td>£151.20</td></tr><tr><td>Professional hotbin compost bin range 1600 litre</td><td>£114</td></tr><tr><td>1 pallet seed compost</td><td>£225</td></tr><tr><td>1 pallet potting on compost</td><td>£140</td></tr></table> <p>They are contributing £100 from their reserves.</p>					2 tons of Cambridgeshire Fen soil and 2 tons of compost	£414.15	Professional Propagation trays x20	£151.20	Professional hotbin compost bin range 1600 litre	£114	1 pallet seed compost	£225	1 pallet potting on compost	£140
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1 pallet seed compost	£225													
1 pallet potting on compost	£140													

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

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## All Forums, September 2025: Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Update

### 1. **Summary**

- 1.1 The government's requirement for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) has now reached an important stage in Hertfordshire, as all 11 councils begin to engage with residents, businesses, community groups and other stakeholders on principles and priorities, as well as potential options for future council arrangements.
- 1.2 Engagement events are being held across Hertfordshire throughout September, including the community forums in North Herts. A survey is now open to allow residents to give their views on how local government in Hertfordshire should be organised.

### 2. **Overview:**

- 2.1 The government's Devolution White Paper requires all local authorities in areas where there are currently two tiers of local government, to develop proposals for reorganisation. These proposals should seek to establish a single tier of local government. District and Borough Councils across Hertfordshire, along with the County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner, are working closely together to consider future arrangements that will best meet the needs of our communities.
- 2.2 This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to help shape how local services, from bins and planning to libraries and social care, are delivered in Hertfordshire. Councils want to protect what already works well while improving the things that could be better. By taking part, residents and organisations can ensure their voices are heard and any future changes deliver long-term benefits to our communities.
- 2.3 The objectives for LGR are:
  - Simplified, more efficient and more resilient council structures
  - More consistent service access
  - Greater transparency in decision-making
  - A stronger local voice in how councils operate

### 3. **Steps to date:**

- 3.1 A single unitary council for the whole of Hertfordshire has been ruled out. With a population of 1.2 million, Hertfordshire is too big to be viable as just one council area. It would be larger

than any local authority in the UK and decision-making would become too far removed from our communities. Instead, councils are working together to explore options that are more locally focused and responsive, including multiple unitary authorities that better reflect the identity of different parts of our county.

- 3.2 An initial round of engagement took place in July with several key strategic partners of the council, including town business improvement districts (BIDs). This initial phase focussed on the principles and opportunities behind potential reorganisation options, and aimed to build understanding of the LGR process.

#### **4. Information to note**

- 4.1 Hertfordshire's 11 councils have developed three potential options for how local government could be structured in the future. Details for each of the three options can be seen on the display boards at the Community Forum.
- 4.2 A survey is now available online for residents to have their say on the proposals. It's the easiest way to give feedback. The link to the survey is on the display boards.
- 4.3 A website has also launched which has more information about the three options for unitary councils and updates related to LGR in Hertfordshire. The link to the survey is also there. The North Herts Council website also has more information and a link to the site.

#### **5. Next steps:**

- 5.1 Feedback from this phase of engagement will be collated and used to shape a final submission for LGR in Hertfordshire. The deadline for submissions is 28 November 2025.
- 5.2 An Extraordinary Council meeting will take place on 13 November 2025 to consider the submission, and a final decision will be made at a Cabinet meeting on 19 November 2025. Other Herts local authorities will also make a final decision that week.
- 5.3 A decision on which proposal to take forward is expected in 2026. It is anticipated that elections to the new unitary authorities will take place in May 2027, and Vesting Day (the date the new councils officially take over from the current councils) will be in 2028.

*Note prepared by: Gavin Midgley, Senior Digital Communications Officer and Christine Crofts, Communications Manager*



Districtwide Community Updates
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team members are presenting and holding a stall at the North Herts &amp; Stevenage Centre for Voluntary Service's Funding Summit on 18<sup>th</sup> September. Register at <a href="#">North Herts &amp; Stevenage Centre for Voluntary Services   GoVolHerts</a></li> <li>• Co-ordinating various local and district wide Network Groups including Youth Action, Food Provision, Arts and Culture and Green and Growing Group.</li> <li>• Coordinating voluntary support response to Asylum Seekers based in North Herts.</li> <li>• Continuing to facilitate NHC Councillors' Community Surgeries.</li> <li>• Sharing and disseminating information on social media and to mailing lists, keeping in touch with the community, voluntary, statutory, and non-statutory agencies.</li> </ul>
Area Community Updates
<p>The Community Partnerships Officer Update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploring the creation of a Hitchin-focused community network aimed at bringing together local groups such as charities, clubs, community centres, faith groups to foster connection, collaboration, and partnership. The proposal includes hosting in-person get-togethers twice a year to strengthen relationships and shared initiatives.</li> <li>• Continuing to build relationships with local community centres which includes a recent meeting with Westmill Community Centre.</li> <li>• A reminder to Councillors that they are very welcome to arrange any meetings or ward walks with the Community Partnerships Officer.</li> </ul>

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## **Updates from North Herts Council's Enterprise and Estate Teams**

### **Churchgate Regeneration Project**

The team are continuing to work on the next phase of the programme, since gaining approval from Full Council to move forward with a preferred option – that will focus on developing the shopping centre, market, Biggin Lane and both Portmill car parks.

The team are working with specialists in parking and market revitalisation to work out what is physically and financially possible on the site. All of this intelligence work is building up to a Procurement process that will see us appoint the most appropriate developer to take the project to the next level.

### **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 continue to build good relationships with the tenants with an improved presence at the centre, and ensuring compliance and day to day management aspects are actioned.

The cleaning of the walkway, repair and decoration of the canopies and hanging baskets and planters have made a significant improvement. 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. An outline proposal has been prepared by consultant engineers. The riverbanks have been cleared, and this enables us to assess works needed to the retaining walls. 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. We hope to be able to share further details later this year. 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 begin work 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. Officers continue to undertake 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.

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