

**NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**



23 February 2026

Our Ref: Southern Rural Community Forum  
5 March 2026

Contact: Community Partnerships Team  
Direct Dial: 01462 474405  
Email: [community@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:community@north-herts.gov.uk)

To: Members of the Community Forum: Councillors Dominic Griffiths (Chair), Vijaiya Poopalasingham (Vice-Chair), David Barnard, Joe Graziano, Caroline McDonnell, Ralph Muncer, Lisa Nash, Steven Patmore, Louise Peace, Claire Strong, Paul Ward and Laura Williams

**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN OF A**

**MEETING OF THE SOUTHERN RURAL COMMUNITY FORUM**

to be held in the

**HYBRID (VIRTUAL / COUNCIL CHAMBERS, COUNCIL  
OFFICES, GERNON ROAD, LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY, SG6  
3JF)**

On

**THURSDAY, 5TH MARCH, 2026 AT 7.30 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. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b>	
<b>2. 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. PRESENTATION - POLICE UPDATE</b> Presentation by North Herts Safer Neighbourhood Team.	(Pages 3 - 4)
<b>4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - GRANT APPLICATIONS</b> To consider community grant applications for recommendation to the Executive Member for Governance.	(Pages 5 - 20)
<b>5. COMMUNITY UPDATE</b> To provide the Forum with an update to ensure Members are kept informed of the work of the Community Partnerships Team.	(Pages 21 - 22)
<b>6. WARD MATTERS &amp; OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS</b> To receive any verbal reports from Members and questions from members of the public regarding Ward matters and Outside Organisations.	
<b>7. FUTURE COMMUNITY FORUMS</b> To discuss topics for future meetings.	

## Hitchin Rural Area Committee Meeting

**05/03/26**

### **Crime Data**

**Compares 01/04/25 – 09/02/26 with 01/04/24 – 09/02/25**

#### **All Crime**

<b>Year</b>	<b>This Year</b>	<b>Last Year</b>	<b>% Change</b>
Hitchin Rural	882	744	+18.5%
North Herts	5875	6387	-8%
County	73008	70599	+3.4%

#### **Burglary Residential - Home**

<b>Year</b>	<b>This Year</b>	<b>Last Year</b>	<b>% Change</b>
Hitchin Rural	29	20	+45%
North Herts	148	149	-0.7%
County	1631	1603	+1.7%

#### **Burglary Business & Community**

<b>Year</b>	<b>This Year</b>	<b>Last Year</b>	<b>% Change</b>
Hitchin Rural	11	11	0%
North Herts	91	96	-5.2%
County	762	902	-15.5%

#### **Robbery Personal**

<b>Year</b>	<b>This Year</b>	<b>Last Year</b>	<b>% Change</b>
Hitchin Rural	3	2	+50%
North Herts	25	42	-40.5%
County	498	640	-22.2%

#### **Shoplifting**

<b>Year</b>	<b>This Year</b>	<b>Last Year</b>	<b>% Change</b>
Hitchin Rural	30	29	+3.4%
North Herts	462	683	-32.4%
County	7432	8496	-12.5%

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## REPORT (FOR RECOMMENDATION & NOTING BY COMMUNITY FORUM)

SOUTHERN RURAL COMMUNITY FORUM  
DATE 5 MARCH 2026

\*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 on the grant applications detailed below.
- 2.3 1<sup>st</sup> Ickleford 9<sup>th</sup> Hitchin Scout Group - £1,500 towards the cost of venue hire for their weekly group sessions in Ickleford.
- 2.4 15<sup>th</sup> Hitchin Scouting - £500 towards the cost of venue hire for their weekly group Sessions in Pirton.
- 2.5 Baldock Junior Badminton Club - £730 towards delivering new weekly badminton and social sessions for older adults in Whitwell.
- 2.6 Pirton Tennis Club - £600 towards painting Pickleball court markings onto the existing MUGA surface.
- 2.7 St Ippolyts Bowls Club - £1,312 towards the purchase of a lawn mower attachment to improve the quality of the bowling green playing surface.

#### 3. BACKGROUND/ RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 The Community Grant budget for Southern Rural Community Forum 2025/26 is **£15,000**.
- 3.2 Community grant payments totalling **£8,048** have been made to date, as itemised in Appendix 1.

3.3 The remaining budget available for community grants for the Southern Rural area for 2025/26 therefore stands at **£6,952**.

#### **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 14.6.9(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 **£6,952**.

5.2 The total amount of funding requested for this meeting is **£4,642**.

5.3 If the applications outlined in Appendices 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 are recommended by the Forum and subsequently approved by the Executive Member for Governance there would be **£2,310** available to carry forward into the 2026/27 budget, subject to approval from Cabinet.

#### **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 May 2024.

11.2 Community Grants Criteria Policy March 2025.

## **12. APPENDICES**

12.1 Appendix 1. Southern Rural Community Grant Budget 25-26

12.2 Appendix 2. 1<sup>st</sup> Ickleford 9<sup>th</sup> Hitchin Scout Group

12.3 Appendix 3. 15<sup>th</sup> Hitchin Scouting

12.4 Appendix 4. Baldock Junior Badminton Club

12.7 Appendix 5. Pirton Tennis Club

12.8 Appendix 6. St Ippolyts Bowls Club

12.9 Appendix 7. Community Updates

## **13. CONTACT OFFICERS**

### **13.1 Author**

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**SOUTHERN RURAL COMMUNITY FORUM**

**SUMMARY FINANCIAL POSITION 2025/26**

<u>Original Budget</u> <u>2025/26</u>	<u>Carry Forward Budget</u> <u>2024/25</u>	<u>Total Funding 2025/26</u>	<u>Grants</u> <u>Allocated</u>	<u>Unallocated</u> <u>Budget</u>
£15,000		£15,000	£8,048	£6,952

**FUNDED PROJECTS**

<u>Project</u>	<u>Forum Date</u>	<u>Grant Allocated</u>
<b>Pirton Community Choir</b> - purchase of a piano stool, microphone boom, keyboard in addition to a case and stand	17th June 2025	£1,073
<b>Whitwell 25 Football Club</b> - hire of the Recreation ground and pavilion	17th June 2025	£1,125
<b>Offley Parish Council</b> - purchase of Christmas trees and lights for village festivals	11th September 2025	£600
<b>Preston School Association</b> - replacement of the outdoor activity trail	11th September 2025	£1,500
<b>Kimpton Folk Festival</b> - The Living Theatre to deliver workshops to local schools and a performance at the 2026 festival	27th November 2025	£1,500
<b>Knebworth Youth Project</b> - youth worker salaries for 2026	27th November 2025	£1,500
<b>Pirton Sports &amp; Social Club</b> - purchase of chairs and chair trolley	27th November 2025	£750
<b>TOTAL SOUTHERN RURAL COMMUNITY FORUM</b>		<b>£8,048</b>

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Appendix 2. 1st Ickleford 9th Hitchin Scout Group

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Version	Issue Date	Changes
1.0	NA	First Draft (BE)

Reference	CG-203			
Name of Organisation	1st Ickleford 9th Hitchin Scout Group			
Organisation Type	Registered charity			
Ward	Cadwell			
Project Type	Venue hire			
Green option considered?	None.			
NHC Councillor involvement that may constitute a conflict of interest	None known.			
Previous financial support within six years	None.			
Documentation reviewed and approved*	Safeguarding	Yes	Accounts	Yes
	Demonstrates clear governance	Yes		
Total applied for	£1,500	Total project cost	£1,811	
<b>Officer Summary</b>				
<p>1st Ickleford 9th Hitchin Scout Group provide young people with fun, challenging activities and opportunities that help them develop practical skills for life. They support young people to grow in confidence, learn new skills and make a positive impact in their communities.</p> <p>Ickleford Scouts are requesting £1,500 to support the cost of venue hire for their weekly Tuesday evening sessions held at Ickleford Village Hall.</p> <p>The group plans to launch a new “Squirrels” section for younger children, which will require extending their weekly hall hire by one hour. This increases their costs by £45 per month, totalling an additional £450 per year (sessions do not run during school holidays).</p> <p>The organisation funds its activities through contributions from parents, who are encouraged to pay what they can. They aim to keep subs as low as possible to support local families during the continued cost-of-living pressures. Receiving this grant would allow the group to redirect its funds towards activities, equipment and experiences that directly benefit young people.</p> <p>With new housing developments in the parish, demand for Scouting provision is growing. The group estimates that up to 100 residents, will benefit from this provision. Sessions run weekly from 6pm to 9.30pm, offering opportunities for children and young people to develop practical skills, confidence and teamwork.</p> <p>The total yearly cost of hall hire is £1,811. The organisation will contribute £311 towards this amount. They are requesting a grant of £1,500 to cover the remaining costs.</p>				

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

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Appendix 3. 15th Hitchin Scout Group

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Version	Issue Date	Changes
1.0	NA	First Draft (BE)

Reference	CG-256		
Name of Organisation	15th Hitchin Scout Group		
Organisation Type	Registered charity		
Ward	Offa		
Project Type	Venue hire		
Green option considered?	None.		
NHC Councillor involvement that may constitute a conflict of interest	None known.		
Previous financial support within six years	None.		
Documentation reviewed and approved*	Safeguarding	Yes	Accounts
	Demonstrates clear governance	Yes	
Total applied for	£500	Total project cost	£1,500
<b>Officer Summary</b>			
<p>15th Hitchin Scout Group supports around 90 children aged 4-14 from Pirton and the surrounding area. Scouts provides skills for life through indoor and outdoor activities that promote personal development, confidence and wellbeing. Young people take part in adventures such as hikes, woodland exploration, fire-lighting, camping and earning a wide range of badges that help them build friendships and spend more time outdoors. Many return later as young leaders completing their Duke of Edinburgh Award.</p> <p>The group runs Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and Squirrels and has been active in the village for nine years. 15th Hitchin Scout Group meet during term time and are entirely volunteer-run.</p> <p>The total project cost for venue hire across three terms, with 10 sessions per term, is £1,500. The organisation is contributing £1,000 and is requesting £500 from the Southern Rural Community Grant to cover the remaining costs. This £500 contribution would fund one full term of venue hire at Pirton Recreation Ground, enabling the group to direct more of its own resources towards activities and equipment for the young people they support.</p>			

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Appendix 4. Baldock Junior Badminton Club

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Version	Issue Date	Changes
1.0	NA	First Draft (BE)

Reference	CG-180			
Name of Organisation	Baldock Junior Badminton Club			
Organisation Type	Club			
Ward	All			
Project Type	Badminton equipment and venue hire			
Green option considered?	None.			
NHC Councillor involvement that may constitute a conflict of interest	None known.			
Previous financial support within six years	None.			
Documentation reviewed and approved*	Safeguarding	Yes	Accounts	Yes
	Demonstrates clear governance	Yes		
Total applied for	£730	Total project cost	£960	
<b>Officer Summary</b>				

Baldock Junior Badminton Club is requesting £730 to deliver new weekly badminton and social sessions for older adults in Southern Rural. While the club primarily supports juniors, they are looking to start an initiative that aims to create at least one new group for older people, offering an hour of gentle badminton followed by 30 minutes of social time with tea and biscuits.

The project responds to a clear need for more accessible physical activity opportunities for older adults, as highlighted through the Age Friendly Herts programme, feedback from the Live Longer Better Day, and the council’s Active North Herts strategy (2023). These sessions are designed to reduce social isolation, build confidence, and support people who face barriers to being active. Groups developed in 2024 showed that some quickly became self-sustaining, while others required more support, so delivery will be adapted based on uptake and participant needs.

Sessions will take place in local, familiar venues such as community centres or village halls, with Whitwell identified as the preferred starting location. The Community Wellbeing & Leisure team will be helping promote the project.

Participants will be able to attend for free during the 12-week funded period, after which groups will contribute enough to cover venue costs to remain sustainable.

Funding will be used to cover venue hire (£360), essential badminton equipment (£180) and refreshments (£20), as well as contributions towards the facilitator (£300) and administration support (£100), both of which are partly provided in-kind. The total project cost is £960, with the organisation contributing £230, and a grant of £730 being requested to cover the remaining costs.

Baldock Junior Badminton Club are also applying to the Hitchin and Letchworth Community Forums, requesting £730 from each to set up similar older-adult badminton and social groups in those areas.

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Appendix 5. Pirton Tennis Club

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Version	Issue Date	Changes
1.0	NA	First Draft (BE)

Reference	CG-138			
Name of Organisation	Pirton Tennis Club			
Organisation Type	Club			
Ward	Offa			
Project Type	Court markings			
Green option considered?	None.			
NHC Councillor involvement that may constitute a conflict of interest	None known.			
Previous financial support within six years	None.			
Documentation reviewed and approved*	Safeguarding	Yes	Accounts	Yes
	Demonstrates clear governance	Yes		
Total applied for	£600	Total project cost	£7,392	
<b>Officer Summary</b>				

Pirton Tennis Club is requesting £600 to paint permanent Pickleball lines onto the existing MUGA surface. Pickleball has rapidly grown in popularity within the village, and in 2025 the club formed a dedicated Pickleball subsection. At present, players rely on temporary court markers, which take considerable time to set up and discourage casual or spontaneous play. Permanent lines would make the court ready for immediate use, supporting increased participation and enabling the club to expand membership.

They've attracted 35 local residents, demonstrating strong interest in the sport. Pickleball appeals to a wide range of ages and particularly engages people who do not usually take part in regular physical activity, offering an easy and accessible introduction to sport. The club also hopes to expand participation among children and families. With the court surface already due to be repainted in 2026, adding Pickleball lines at the same time is both cost-effective and practical.

The project has the potential to benefit up to 150 North Herts residents, improving access to local sporting facilities, increasing use of the MUGA, and supporting health and wellbeing by encouraging more people to get active.

The total project cost is £7,392, which includes £600 for two sets of permanent Pickleball court lines and £6,792 for repainting the surface and existing tennis lines. The organisation is contributing £6,792 towards the resurfacing and tennis line repainting and is requesting a grant of £600 to fund the Pickleball line markings.

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Appendix 6. St Ippolyts Bowls Club

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Version	Issue Date	Changes
1.0	NA	First Draft (BE)

Reference	CG-221			
Name of Organisation	St Ippolyts Bowls Club			
Organisation Type	Club			
Ward	Graveley, St Ippolyts & Wymondley			
Project Type	Lawn improvement			
Green option considered?	None.			
NHC Councillor involvement that may constitute a conflict of interest	None known.			
Previous financial support within six years	None.			
Documentation reviewed and approved*	Safeguarding	Yes	Accounts	Yes
	Demonstrates clear governance	Yes		
Total applied for	£1,312	Total project cost	£1,812	
<b>Officer Summary</b>				
<p>St Ippolyts Bowls Club is requesting £1,312 to improve the quality of its playing surface. Over recent years, the green has deteriorated despite regular maintenance, and the club has sought professional advice on how to restore it to a suitable standard. The green is used both for bowling and as an important social space for members, as well as by visiting players during competitions. Improving the surface will help support existing players and encourage new members to join, strengthening the club's role within the community.</p> <p>To achieve this, the club intends to purchase an Allet Verticutter cassette, designed specifically to fit the Allet mower they already use. This equipment will remove thatch build-up and help create a smoother, more reliable surface for play. The project will benefit around 30 local residents.</p> <p>The total project cost is £1,812, which covers the purchase of the Verticutter cassette. The club is contributing £500 through its own fundraising efforts and is requesting £1,312 from the Southern Rural Community Grant to meet the remaining cost.</p>				

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## Districtwide Community Updates

- The North Herts Heroes Awards judging process is now complete, and the winners have been selected. They will be celebrated at the awards event on Thursday 19 March, where they will be recognised as outstanding individuals who make a positive difference in our local community.
- The new Community Grants Application platform launched on 17 November. The application form can be found here [Community grants | North Herts Council](#). If councillors or organisations would like any guidance on this, please speak to the Community Partnerships Officer or get in touch with the team via [community@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:community@north-herts.gov.uk).
- To commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day, a video was shared via North Herts Council socials on 27 January and be viewed on NHC YouTube page - [Holocaust Memorial Day 2026 - 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

The Community Partnerships Officer Update:

- Continuing to attend Parish Council meetings to make closer links with the parishes and local groups.
- Met with Pirton Sports & Social Club and Pirton Parish Council to view the new pavilion progress.
- Supported a Scam Awareness workshop with the NHC Community Wellbeing Team and Herts Police in Knebworth.
- Attending the Village Halls and Community Building Conference 2026 on 5<sup>th</sup> March. This year's theme is around Health & Wellbeing for this year's conference.

A reminder to Councillors that they are very welcome to arrange any meetings or ward walks with the Community Partnerships Officer.

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