

22 May 2026

Our Ref Hitchin Community Forum 2 June 2026
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, 2ND JUNE, 2026 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**

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.	ANNUAL HITCHIN COMMUNITY FORUM MINUTES To approve the annual minutes of the 2024, 2025 and 2026 Hitchin Community Forums.	(Pages 5 - 10)
4.	TOWN TALK - NEW LOCAL PLAN SCOPING CONSULTATION Presentation on New Local Plan scoping consultation by North Herts Council's Planning Team followed by Q&A. Consultation runs from 11 May to 28 June 2026. Share your views on: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• how you would like to be involved in shaping the Local Plan• the key issues the Local Plan should address• what should be included in the overall vision for North Herts Full details, and how to take part in the consultation can be found here: https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/.../share-your-views-new...	
5.	HITCHIN BID UPDATE To receive a verbal update from the Hitchin BID on their work in Hitchin town centre.	
6.	PUBLIC PRESENTATION - GRANT APPLICATIONS To consider community grant applications for recommendation to the Executive Member for Governance.	(Pages 11 - 26)
7.	COMMUNITY UPDATE	(Pages

To provide the Forum with an update to ensure Members are kept informed of the work of the Community and Partnerships Team. 27 - 28)

8. **WARD MATTERS & OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS** (Pages 29 - 32)
To receive any verbal reports from Members and questions from members of the public regarding Ward matters and Outside Organisations.

Short written updates have been published with this agenda on Churchgate, Charnwood House, Riverside Walk and Oughtonhead Weir Project.

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

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Agenda Item 3

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

HITCHIN COMMUNITY FORUM

MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, GERNON ROAD, LETCHWORTH, SG6 3JF
ON THURSDAY, 23RD MAY, 2024 AT 7.30 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Ian Albert, Clare Billing, Val Bryant, Jon Clayden, Sam Collins, Elizabeth Dennis, Keith Hoskins, Chris Lucas, Nigel Mason, Dave Winstanley, Donna Wright and Daniel Wright-Mason.*

In Attendance: *James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager).*

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio Recording 1 hour 9 minutes 29 seconds

N.B: There is no separate audio recording of this meeting. Time stamps refer to the recording of Annual Council on the 23 May 2024.

There were no apologies for absence.

2 ELECTION OF A CHAIR FOR CIVIC YEAR 2024-2025

Councillor Val Bryant proposed and Councillor Nigel Mason seconded and, it was:

RESOLVED: That Councillor Ian Albert be elected as Chair of the Hitchin Community Forum for the Civic Year 2024-25.

3 ELECTION OF A VICE-CHAIR FOR CIVIC YEAR 2024-2025

Councillor Nigel Mason proposed and Councillor Val Bryant seconded and, it was:

RESOLVED: That Councillor Clare Billings be elected as Vice-Chair of the Hitchin Community Forum for the Civic Year 2024-25.

The meeting closed at 8.44 pm

Chair

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NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

HITCHIN COMMUNITY FORUM

**MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, GERONON ROAD, LETCHWORTH, SG6 3JF
ON THURSDAY, 22ND MAY, 2025 AT 7.30 PM**

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Ian Albert, Val Bryant, Jon Clayden, Sam Collins, Elizabeth Dennis, Keith Hoskins, Chris Lucas, Nigel Mason, Dave Winstanley, Donna Wright and Daniel Wright-Mason.*

In Attendance: *James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager).*

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 1 hour 5 minutes and 45 seconds

N.B: There is no separate audio recording of this meeting. Time stamps refer to the recording of Annual Council on the 22 May 2025.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Clare Billing.

2 ELECTION OF A CHAIR FOR CIVIC YEAR 2025-26

Councillor Dave Winstanley proposed and Councillor Keith Hoskins seconded and, it was:

RESOLVED: That Councillor Ian Albert be elected as Chair of the Hitchin Community Forum for the Civic Year 2025-26.

3 ELECTION OF A VICE-CHAIR FOR CIVIC YEAR 2025-26

Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor Nigel Mason seconded and, it was:

RESOLVED: That Councillor Clare Billing be elected as Vice-Chair of the Hitchin Community Forum for the Civic Year 2025-26.

The meeting closed at 8.37 pm

Chair

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NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

HITCHIN COMMUNITY FORUM

**MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER - DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, GERONON ROAD, LETCHWORTH, SG6 3JF
ON THURSDAY, 21ST MAY, 2026 AT 7.30 PM**

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Ian Albert, Val Bryant, Jon Clayden, Sam Collins, Elizabeth Dennis, Keith Hoskins, Chris Lucas, Nigel Mason, Dave Winstanley, Donna Wright and Daniel Wright-Mason.*

In Attendance: *Robert Filby (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer) and James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager).*

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 43 minutes 22 seconds

N.B. There is no separate audio recording of this meeting. Time stamps refer to the recording of Annual Council on the 21 May 2026.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Clare Billing.

2 ELECTION OF A CHAIR FOR THE CIVIC YEAR 2026/27

Councillor Nigel Mason proposed and Councillor Keith Hoskins seconded and, it was:

RESOLVED: That Councillor Ian Albert be elected as Chair of the Hitchin Community Forum for the Civic Year 2026-27.

3 ELECTION OF A VICE-CHAIR FOR THE CIVIC YEAR 2026/27

Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor Donna Wright seconded and, it was:

RESOLVED: That Councillor Clare Billing be elected as Vice-Chair of the Hitchin Community Forum for the Civic Year 2026-27.

The meeting closed at 8.16 pm

Chair

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REPORT (FOR RECOMMENDATION & NOTING BY COMMUNITY FORUM)

HITCHIN COMMUNITY FORUM
DATE 2 JUNE 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, 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 Partners of Wilshere-Dacre Junior Academy - **£1,500** towards replacing playground equipment.
- 2.4 Herts Disability Sports Foundation - **£1,500** towards their Bikes Without Barriers programme at Oughton Primary School.
- 2.5 SoW (Shout or Whisper) CIC - **£1,500** towards three 'Spotlight' events for local creatives to perform their spoken word work.
- 2.6 Hitchin British Schools Trust - **£1,501** towards their first Summer School.
- 2.7 Resolve - **£1,500** towards the costs of a Key Worker who runs the Group Therapy and Key Work Sessions.

3. BACKGROUND/ RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 The Community Grant budget for Hitchin Community Forum 2026/27 is **£21,227**.
- 3.2 No Community grant payments have been made to date for the financial year 2026/27.

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 Bulletin (MIB) 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 3.1 the Community Grant budget available is **£21,227**
- 5.2 The total amount of funding requested for this meeting is **£7,501**.
- 5.3 If the applications outlined in Appendices 2 - 6 are recommended by the Forum and subsequently approved by the Executive Member for Governance there would be **£13,726** available for Community Grants for the remainder of the 2026-2027 financial year.
- 5.4 The applications outlined in Appendices 4 and 5 have been determined to be a subsidy under the Subsidy Control Act. Appendix 4 is a subsidy as there is a market for spoken word events. Appendix 5 is a subsidy as there is a market for summer school activities. 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 the Herts Disability Sports Foundation grant application. Their Bike without Barriers programme refurbishes bikes that are donated to them and use salvaged parts where possible.

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 [Council constitution | North Herts Council](#)

11.2 [Community Grants Criteria Policy March 2025](#)

12. APPENDICES

12.1 Appendix 1. Hitchin Grant Budget 26-27

12.2 Appendix 2. Partners of Wilshere-Dacre Junior Academy

12.3 Appendix 3. Herts Disability Sports Foundation

12.4 Appendix 4. SoW CIC

12.5 Appendix 5. Hitchin British Schools Trust

12.6 Appendix 6. Resolve

12.7 Appendix 7. Community Updates

13. CONTACT OFFICERS

13.1 Author

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Appendix 2: Partners of Wilshere-Dacre Junior Academy

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Version	Issue Date	Changes
1.0	NA	First Draft (BE)

Reference	CG-329			
Name of Organisation	Partners of Wilshere-Dacre Junior Academy			
Organisation Type	Registered Charity			
Ward	Hitchin Highbury			
Project Type	Youth			
Green option considered?	Not applicable			
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	£8,656.80	
Officer Summary				
Partners of Wilshere-Dacre Junior Academy (POWA) are a voluntary organisation run by the parent and family community of Wilshere-Dacre Junior Academy.				
They would like funding towards replacement of playground equipment for the outdoor space at Wilshere-Dacre, after the school's previous equipment had to be removed in summer 2025 as it no longer met safety standards. They would like to purchase a set of climbing equipment such as monkey bars, "A" frame and rope walk. The school completed a procurement process to identify the most suitable quote.				
POWA believe this is a hugely important addition to their playground and will significantly enhance the children's wellbeing and learning. At present the outdoor space at the school includes a large green area and smaller hard-surfaced area used for ball games and other sports, plus some covered seating. Although they can still be active on the grass and hard-surface areas, the removal of the previous equipment last summer means they no longer have any dedicated structures for climbing, swinging or more adventurous physical play.				
Playgrounds can help children practice cooperation, communication and problem solving, as well as building confidence and resilience through calculated risk-taking in a safe environment. They hear frequently from the children how much they miss the old equipment.				
Wilshere-Dacre school community have already raised around £6,000 towards the project through sponsored events such as the Hitchin Soapbox Derby and school disco events. They aim to reach the target by July 2026.				

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

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Appendix 3: Herts Disability Sports Foundation

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Version	Issue Date	Changes
1.0	NA	First Draft (BE)

Reference	CG-309			
Name of Organisation	Herts Disability Sports Foundation			
Organisation Type	Registered Charity			
Ward	Hitchin Oughton			
Project Type	Youth activity			
Green option considered?	All bikes are donated to HDSF and are refurbished for children to use.			
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	£2,200	
Officer Summary				
<p>Herts Disability Sports Foundation (HDSF) work with people with disabilities across Hertfordshire and young people in areas of deprivation with their two-wheel cycling programme.</p> <p>They are applying for funding towards running their Bikes without Barriers programme at Oughton Primary School with Year 5 and 6 classes. To run this programme, it usually requires two visits to the school, depending on the needs of the young people. They work with the whole class initially and those who can ride a bike do fun skills in preparation for Bikeability. Those that cannot ride a bike, have learn to ride sessions.</p> <p>All children are asked to bring their bike/helmet into school if they have one. HDSF's mechanics check bikes to make sure they are safe to use. Repairs are carried out on site for those that need it. Any young people that do not have their own bike will be given one if they can ride it and with parents' permission. Any young people at the end of the intervention that still can't ride a bike will be given a free voucher to HDSF's SEND 1-1 sessions in Baldock to continue their journey.</p> <p>This funding would go towards the cost of staffing these sessions, which includes instructors and mechanics. HDSF have a Hertfordshire based funder who will part fund if HDSF get council support. Therefore £700 is already committed if this application is successful, which would cover the remaining costs of equipment (helmets and spare parts to fix bikes), bike donation collections and ad hoc expenses.</p>				

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

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Version	Issue Date	Changes
1.0	NA	First Draft (BE)

Reference	CG-326			
Name of Organisation	SoW CIC			
Organisation Type	Community Interest Company			
Ward	The Market Theatre is in Hitchin Highbury Ward			
Project Type	Arts and Culture			
Green option considered?	Not applicable			
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	£1,500	

Officer Summary

[SoW CIC](#) (Shout or Whisper) are a Community Writing Project that creates opportunities for people to share their story and hone their creative writing skills. They provide safe spaces that encourage performers of all abilities to stand up and have their work celebrated in front of a supportive audience. The space is for poets, playwrights, musicians, rappers, novelists, storytellers, clowns and everything in between to simply try things out. They are after experimentation, not perfection.

As part of the events programme they offer the community, they would like funding towards running three 'Spotlight' events for Autumn to Spring 2027 at The Market Theatre in Hitchin. The events are an opportunity for local creatives to perform their work, so that SoW can stimulate the spoken word creative scene in Hitchin.

As a part of the evening, they are also going to be inviting established performers to read their material. The objective is to create a sustainable space to allow for local poets, musicians and performers to grow their onstage confidence, to stimulate written creativity. Having run a handful of these already, they are evenings of connection and community. This funding would help them to do more.

Funding would go towards:

- Hire costs of The Market Theatre
- Headline Performer Fees and Contributing Performer Fees which have been calculated from SoW's experience in the industry.
- Light and sound technicians, with reasonable quoted rates
- Pre and during event co-ordination
- Social Media Marketing

They will have flexible ticket pricing to keep the event accessible. Any profit made will go towards funding their next season of events at The Vic in Hitchin.

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=Document Control:

Version	Issue Date	Changes
1.0	NA	First Draft (BE)

Reference	CG-329			
Name of Organisation	The British Schools Museum operated by Hitchin British Schools Trust			
Organisation Type	Museum – Registered Charity			
Ward	The Museum is in Hitchin Highbury Ward			
Project Type	Youth			
Green option considered?	Not applicable			
NHC Councillor involvement that may constitute a conflict of interest	Cllr Clayden is a NHC Member representative for the Museum Cllr Hoskins is a member of Friends of British Schools Museum			
Previous financial support within six years	£1,133 in December 2024 from Hitchin Community Forum towards updating their display room			
Documentation reviewed and approved*	Safeguarding	Yes	Accounts	Yes
	Demonstrates clear governance	Yes		
Total applied for	£1,501	Total project cost	£2,186	
Officer Summary				
<p>The British Schools Museum (BSM) connects its heritage of educational history with local communities and wider audiences. Through the preservation of its historic buildings and collections, the Museum enables people of all ages to explore and enjoy the story of learning and schooling.</p> <p>BSM are requesting funding towards its first weeklong Summer School to expand its summer programming and meet the needs of local families. During the summer school, up to 15 children will explore the museum site through drama and filming activities designed to enhance their creative skills and teamwork. The project will also help BSM build lasting relationships with participants and begin developing a youth community connected to the Museum. In addition, the programme will contribute to their financial sustainability.</p> <p>To deliver the programme safely and to a high standard, they will hire three camp supervisors who will lead activities and ensure full compliance with health, safety, and child protection procedures. They are seeking support from the Community Grant to cover their wages for the duration of the weeklong Summer School. The grant will also help keep participation fees affordable to local families.</p> <p>They anticipate raising £300 from the participant fees to go towards the project. And BSM are contributing £385 towards it. This will also go towards costs of DBS checks, meals for participants, marketing and paid hours of preparation.</p>				

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

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Appendix 6: Resolve

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Version	Issue Date	Changes
1.0	NA	First Draft (BE)

Reference	CG-328			
Name of Organisation	Resolve			
Organisation Type	Registered Charity			
Ward	Various			
Project Type	Support for substance / alcohol misuse			
Green option considered?	N/A			
NHC Councillor involvement that may constitute a conflict of interest	None known			
Previous financial support within six years	<p>In 2025 the below was awarded towards costs of Key Workers £1,500 Hitchin Community Forum in March £1,000 Royston Community Forum in September £1,500 Letchworth Community Forum in September £1,000 Baldock Community Forum in December</p> <p>In January 2024 the below was awarded towards running costs: £1,500 Hitchin Area Forum £1,500 Baldock Area Forum £1,500 Letchworth Area Forum £915 Royston Area Forum £500 Southern Rural Area Forum</p>			
Documentation reviewed and approved*	Safeguarding	Yes	Accounts	Yes
	Demonstrates clear governance	Yes		
Total applied for	£1,500	Total project cost	£186,350 (Running costs for one year)	

Officer Summary

[Resolve](#) supports the treatment and rehabilitation of people suffering from substance and alcohol misuse problems. Resolve’s primary aim is to assist clients to move to a manageable positive lifestyle, contributing to and enhancing the communities within which they live. Their offer includes group therapy sessions, dedicated 121 key work and access to counselling.

Funding is being requested towards the costs of key workers who run the Group Therapy and Key Work Sessions, which will include supporting Hitchin clients. In 2025 they had 29 clients from Hitchin.

Substance misuse remains one of the most pressing and complex public health issues facing both the UK and Hertfordshire. There are approximately 11,000 alcohol dependent adults in Hertfordshire, with an unmet need of 77%. Currently there are no statutory or community drug and alcohol treatment day services in North Herts, north of Stevenage, other than Resolve.

Overall running costs for Resolve for one year is £186,350. Since applying to the Hitchin Forum in 2025, Resolve have now recruited a Fundraising Manager who is strategically

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

raising funds. Income secured so far includes funding from National Lottery, Henry Smith Charity and Albert Gubay Foundation.

They have also applied to Southern Rural Community Forum for £750 towards the costs of key workers.

Districtwide Community Updates

- The North Herts Heroes winners were celebrated at an awards event on Thursday 19 March, where they were recognised as outstanding individuals who make a positive difference in our local community - [Community champions celebrated at North Herts Heroes awards 2026 | North Herts Council](#)
- 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.
- 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 continues to build and foster relationships within the community.

A local Hitchin Primary School will be visiting the Council Offices for an event where pupils will learn about local democracy.

Hertfordshire Volunteer Fair will be held in Hitchin on 5th June, organised by GoVolHerts - [Hertfordshire Volunteer Fair 2026 | GoVolHerts](#) An opportunity to meet over 30 charities and organisations and learn about what opportunities are available.

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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Updates from North Herts Council's Enterprise and Estate Teams

Churchgate Regeneration Project

The team have now held three successful Churchgate all member briefings, which provided Cllrs with an opportunity to find out the latest progress updates and to ask them team specific questions. The discussions held were constructive, and the team are now pulling together a FAQ style document detailing all questions asked/points raised at the sessions.

More recently, the team have returned from this year's UKREiiF event in Leeds. This is the 3rd time that North Herts have had presence at this event, both in a Churchgate capacity and 'Invest Hertfordshire'. The event was a great success, and demonstrated to lead developers the amount of progress that the Churchgate Regen project has achieved since last year. NH held a breakfast event, attended by 45 representatives from developers, investors, and interested parties. This was a great platform to tell the 'market' what we've been up to, and to generate even more interest in preparation for future procurement.

On that note, the team have launched a pre-market engagement to appoint a developer who will take us through the crucial next steps of the project - bringing us up to the main 'delivery' procurement. This partner will tell us what is possible, keeping in mind the wealth of work the team have already completed on the project - and of course, the 5 key development principles. The Project Board know what they'd like to deliver on the site, with input from the public consultation - now it's time for the developers to tell us what is possible before committing to any large investment/programme.

It is an exciting time for this project, and we are moving forward with pace. Our next milestone will be at Cabinet on 16th June, whereby we are seeking approval to appoint the successful developer.

Churchgate Shopping Centre Management

Praxis Property Management continue the day-to-day management of the centre. The Council continues to manage the centre to support and maintain existing lettings and attract new tenants pending any potential longer-term redevelopment. This includes exploring a number of innovative short term community uses of vacant units, including Unit 21 (former Iceland) and 16/17 Market Place. Further details to follow. Praxis continue to work collaboratively with Visit Hitchin regarding events over the coming months that we can work on together. A number of new lettings have completed recently, including 39 Churchyard Walk (Physiotherapist), Unit 6 (Richard Taylor Travel), 8-10 (Italian restaurant) and Unit 19 (Charitable use - workshops and a small retail area for furniture sales).

Riverside Walk – Riverside Walk, Hitchin

This remains within the Responsible Growth priority of the Council Plan to deliver opening up the walkway between Bridge Street and Biggin Lane to increase footfall in this part of the town centre. The Council have a consulting engineer leading on the project and the drawings are now in final form subject to approvals. We are now at a key juncture to finalise the detail, timescale for delivery and required budget. This follows a period of information gathering including trial pits to check ground conditions and the position of existing underground services, consultation with the Environment Agency, Highways Authority and initial discussion with the planning authority. We have also had ongoing discussion with nearby residents regarding the position of fencing, gates and how to mitigate impact where appropriate.

Preliminary works to repair uneven surfaces and clear the river banks have already been undertaken.

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. There are a number of stages to delivery of this project including outline and detailed design (including lighting), consultation with key stakeholders, planning and conservation area consents, Highway and Environment Agency consents, procuring the bridge manufacture, tender for the works and delivery. The timing of the works are subject to receipt of the necessary consents and final budget approval and will be advised in due course.

Charnwood House

The Council remains committed to delivering its policy for Charnwood House to be brought back into use to support community-based activities, recognising the potential value of the asset to local and regional groups and the wider town centre. The Council is in the final stage of appointing the chosen agent to undertake a new marketing of the property this summer. This will clearly set out the Council's aspirations, seeking proposals from suitable interested parties (or groups) and offers based on the Council's proposed letting arrangement which will include works required to the property, lease length and acceptable uses. We are maintaining a list of organisations and groups who have expressed an interest previously and they will be contacted once the property is due to be marketed.

Oughtonhead Weir Project update from the Service Manager for Green Space

Following a recent meeting with Affinity Water and Hertfordshire County Council, I'm pleased to confirm that the Oughtonhead weir project continues to progress positively. Discussions have focused not only on the weir works themselves, but also on wider river restoration and habitat improvement opportunities, with the intention of combining these elements into a single coordinated programme of works. This approach should help ensure a smoother delivery process and improved value overall.

Tender documentation is currently being prepared, with the aim of commencing works in the autumn, which is considered the most suitable timing from an ecological and habitat perspective. We are very pleased to be continuing collaborative work with Affinity Water, Hertfordshire County Council and the Environment Agency on the project, and Affinity Water is exploring a financial contribution towards both the habitat improvements and the weir works.

Any further questions please contact - Alan.North@north-herts.gov.uk

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