

3 June 2026

Our Ref Southern Rural Community Forum  
11 June 2026  
Contact. Community and Partnerships Team  
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To: Members of the Community Forum: Councillors Dominic Griffiths (Chair), Paul Ward (Vice-Chair), David Barnard, Joe Graziano, Caroline McDonnell, Ralph Muncer, Lisa Nash, Steven Patmore, Louise Peace, Vijaiya Poopalasingham, Claire Strong and Laura Williams

**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN OF A**

**MEETING OF THE SOUTHERN RURAL COMMUNITY FORUM**

to be held in the

**KNEBWORTH VILLAGE HALL, PARK LANE, KNEBWORTH,  
SG3 6PD**

On

**THURSDAY, 11TH JUNE, 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. ANNUAL SOUTHERN RURAL COMMUNITY FORUM MINUTES</b> To approve the annual minutes of the 2024, 2025 and 2026 Southern Rural Community Forums.	(Pages 5 - 10)
<b>4. PRESENTATION - NEW LOCAL PLAN SCOPING CONSULTATION</b> 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"><li>• How you would like to be involved in shaping the Local Plan</li><li>• The key issues the Local Plan should address</li><li>• What should be included in the overall vision for North Herts</li></ul> Full details, and how to take part in the consultation can be found here: <a href="https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/.../share-your-views-new...">https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/.../share-your-views-new...</a>	
<b>5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - GRANT APPLICATIONS</b> To consider community grant applications for recommendation to the Executive Member for Governance.	(Pages 11 - 22)
<b>6. COMMUNITY UPDATE</b> To provide the Forum with an update to ensure Members are kept informed of the work of the Community and Partnerships Team.	(Pages 23 - 24)
<b>7. 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

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

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# Agenda Item 3

## NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### SOUTHERN RURAL COMMUNITY FORUM

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

#### MINUTES

**Present:** *Councillors: David Barnard, Joe Graziano, Dominic Griffiths, Caroline McDonnell, Ralph Muncer, Steven Patmore, Louise Peace, Vijaiya Poopalasingham, Claire Strong, Paul Ward and Laura Williams.*

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

#### 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

*Audio Recording 1 hour 13 minutes 25 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.*

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Lisa Nash.

#### 2 ELECTION OF A CHAIR FOR CIVIC YEAR 2024-2025

Councillor Paul Ward nominated Councillor Dominic Griffiths for Chair of Southern Rural Community Forum. This was seconded by Councillor Caroline McDonnell.

Councillor Ralph Muncer nominated Councillor David Barnard for Chair of Southern Rural Community Forum. This was seconded by Councillor Steven Patmore, and following a vote, it was:

**RESOLVED:** That Councillor David Barnard be elected as Chair of the Southern Rural Community Forum for the Civic Year 2024-25.

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

Councillor David Barnard nominated Councillor Claire Strong for Vice-Chair of Southern Rural Community Forum. This was seconded by Councillor Ralph Muncer.

Councillor Paul Ward nominated Councillor Lisa Nash for Vice-Chair of Southern Rural Community Forum. This was seconded by Councillor Dominic Griffiths, and following a vote, it was:

**RESOLVED:** That Councillor Claire Strong be elected as Vice-Chair of the Southern Rural Community Forum for the Civic Year 2024-25.

The meeting closed at 8.49 pm

Chair

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**NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**SOUTHERN RURAL COMMUNITY FORUM**

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

**MINUTES**

**Present:** *Councillors: David Barnard, Joe Graziano, Ralph Muncer, Lisa Nash, Steven Patmore, Louise Peace, Vijaiya Poopalasingham and Laura Williams.*

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

**1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

*Audio recording – 1 hour 9 minutes and 04 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 Councillors Dominic Griffiths, Claire Strong, Paul Ward and Caroline McDonnell.

**2 ELECTION OF A CHAIR FOR CIVIC YEAR 2025-26**

Councillor Louise Peace proposed Councillor Dominic Griffiths for Chair of Southern Rural Community Forum. This was seconded by Councillor Lisa Nash.

Councillor Ralph Muncer nominated Councillor David Barnard for Chair of Southern Rural Community Forum. This was seconded by Councillor Steven Patmore.

Following a vote, neither nominated candidate was successful.

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager advised that the election of the Chair would therefore take place at the next meeting of the Southern Rural Community Forum.

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

Councillor Ralph Muncer nominated Councillor Joe Graziano for Vice-Chair of Southern Rural Community Forum. This was seconded by Councillor Steven Patmore.

Councillor Laura Williams nominated Councillor Vijaiya Poopalasingham for Vice-Chair of Southern Rural Community Forum. This was seconded by Councillor Vijaiya Poopalasingham. Following a vote, neither nominated candidate was successful.

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager advised that the election of the Vice-Chair would therefore take place at the next meeting of the Southern Rural Community Forum.

The meeting closed at 8.42 pm

Chair

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**NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**SOUTHERN RURAL 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: Dominic Griffiths, Vijaiya Poopalasingham, David Barnard, Claire Strong, Caroline McDonnell, Ralph Muncer, Lisa Nash, Steven Patmore, Louise Peace, Paul Ward and Laura Williams.*

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

**1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

*Audio recording – 47 minutes 9 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 Joe Graziano.

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

Councillor Paul Ward proposed Councillor Dominic Griffiths for Chair of the Southern Rural Community Forum, and this was seconded by Councillor Caroline McDonnell.

Councillor Ralph Muncer proposed Councillor Joe Graziano for Chair of the Southern Rural Community Forum, and this was seconded by Councillor David Barnard.

Following a vote, it was:

**RESOLVED:** That Councillor Dominic Griffiths be elected as Chair of the Southern Rural Community Forum for the 2026/27 Civic Year.

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

Councillor Dominic Griffiths proposed Councillor Paul Ward for Vice-Chair of the Southern Rural Community Forum, and this was seconded by Councillor Caroline McDonnell.

Councillor Ralph Muncer proposed Councillor Steven Patmore for Vice-Chair of the Southern Rural Community Forum, and this was seconded by Councillor David Barnard.

Following a vote, it was:

**RESOLVED:** That Councillor Paul Ward be elected as Vice-Chair of the Southern Rural Community Forum for the Civic Year 2026-27.

The meeting closed at 8.20 pm

Chair

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

SOUTHERN RURAL COMMUNITY FORUM  
DATE 11 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 Pirton School - **£858** towards the purchase of scooter and bike racks for the school.
- 2.4 Preston Village Hall - **£1,500** towards the purchase of a projector and screen for the village hall.
- 2.5 Resolve - **£750** 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 Southern Rural Community Forum 2026/27 is **£17,310**.
- 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 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 **£17,310**.

5.2 The total amount of funding requested for this meeting is **£3,108**.

5.3 If the applications outlined in Appendices 2, 3 and 4 are recommended by the Forum and subsequently approved by the Executive Member for Governance there would be **£14,202** available for Community Grants for the remainder of the 2026-2027 financial year.

5.4 The application outlined in Appendix 3 has been determined to be a subsidy under the Subsidy Control Act. Appendix 3 is a subsidy as there is a market for venue hire. The applicant has 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 Pirton School grant application. The installation of scooter racks promotes walking and scooting as alternatives to car travel. This helps reduce traffic emissions, supports environmental sustainability and improve air quality around the school.

## **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. Southern Rural Grant Budget 26-27

12.2 Appendix 2. Pirton School

12.3 Appendix 3. Preston Village Hall

12.4 Appendix 4. Resolve

12.5 Appendix 5. Community Updates

## **13. CONTACT OFFICERS**

### **13.1 Author**

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Version	Issue Date	Changes
1.0	NA	First Draft (BE)

Reference	CG-305			
Name of Organisation	Pirton School			
Organisation Type	Primary School			
Ward	Offa			
Project Type	Youth			
Green option considered?	The application has environmental benefits by encouraging walking and scooting instead of car use, reducing traffic emissions and improving air quality near the school.			
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	£858	Total project cost	£858	

Officer Summary

[Pirton School](#) is applying for funding to purchase scooter racks to encourage more pupils to travel to school by scooter or bike rather than by car. Although there are existing bike racks on site, they are located at the back of the school and are not used regularly. New racks positioned in a more visible and accessible location would help increase uptake and encourage active travel.

This will benefit pupils by providing safe, convenient storage for scooters and bikes while supporting their physical health and wellbeing and helping reduce health inequalities. Parents will benefit from a more manageable school run, with secure storage offering reassurance and encouraging more families to leave their car at home.

The wider Pirton community will also see positive impacts, including fewer cars on the road, reduced congestion, and fewer parking pressures around the school. As most school traffic comes from local families, even a small shift to active travel could make a noticeable difference.

Pirton School are requesting £858 which will go towards the purchase of four scooter pods, each costing £214.50.

Overall, the project supports a healthier, more active community while strengthening connections by encouraging people to walk and engage more with their local environment.

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

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Appendix 3. Preston Village Hall

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Version	Issue Date	Changes
1.0	NA	First Draft (BE)

Reference	CG-341			
Name of Organisation	Preston Village Hall (aka THE SEEBOHM TRUST)			
Organisation Type	Registered charity			
Ward	Hitchwood			
Project Type	Venue equipment			
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	£2,748	

**Officer Summary**

Preston Village Hall is seeking funding to purchase a permanent projector and screen for the village hall. As a new installation, this equipment would enhance the hall's functionality and support a wider range of activities and events for the community.

This investment will benefit residents of Preston as well as external groups who hire the hall, by offering versatile and reliable audio-visual equipment. The projector and screen will enable a variety of uses, including community cinema nights, workshops, cultural events, and meetings for local clubs, organisations, and businesses. This added capability will make the hall more appealing as a venue and support a broader programme of activities.

The total project cost is £2,748 to purchase and install a ceiling mounted projector and screen. Preston Village Hall are contributing £1,248 towards the project and are requesting £1,500 from the Southern Rural Community Forum.

Overall, the project will help bring people together by creating more opportunities for shared experiences and community engagement. By improving the hall's facilities, it strengthens its role as a central hub for social, cultural, and professional activities within the community.

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

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Appendix 4. Resolve

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Version	Issue Date	Changes
1.0	NA	First Draft (BE)

Reference	CG-339			
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 <b>2025</b> 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 <b>January 2024</b> 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	£750	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 Southern Rural clients. In 2025 they had 2 clients from Knebworth, 1 from Codicote and 25 from Stevenage, of which Great Ashby is included.

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.

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

Overall running costs for Resolve for one year is £186,350. Since applying to the Southern Rural Forum in 2024, Resolve have now recruited a Fundraising Manager who is strategically raising funds. Income secured so far includes funding from National Lottery, Henry Smith Charity and Albert Gubay Foundation.

They have also applied to Hitchin Community Forum for £1,500 towards the costs of key workers.

## Districtwide Community Updates

- The CP Team facilitated the set up of a Community Centres Network, the first meeting of which was held on 19 May. The event was successful and there was positive feedback from attendees.
- 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](mailto: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, this includes:

- Attending 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.
- Attended the Preston Primary School trim trail opening. They received a grant from the Southern Rural Community Forum in September 2025.
- Met with Codicote Netball team to discuss the community grant and signpost to available support.
- Attending the Hertfordshire Volunteer Fair in Hitchin on 5<sup>th</sup> 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.

North Herts CVS have organised a Volunteering Summit in July for Local Charities and Community Groups - [Volunteering Summit 2026: For Local Charities & Community Groups](#)

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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