

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL



7 September 2026

Our Ref Hitchin Community Forum 15 September
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, 15TH SEPTEMBER, 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.	TOWN TALK - GREEN SPACE CONSULTATION Presentation on North Herts Council's green space consultation by North Herts Green Space Team followed by Q&A. Consultation runs from 6 July to 30 September 2026. Full details, and how to take part in the consultation can be found here: https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/news/have-your-say-north-herts-councils-green-spaces	(Pages 5 - 10)
4.	TOWN TALK - RIVERSIDE WALK UPDATE Presentation on the planned Riverside Walk by North Herts Council's Principal Estates Surveyor	
5.	HITCHIN BID UPDATE To receive a verbal update from the Hitchin BID on their work in Hitchin town centre.	
6.	NEW LOCAL PLAN UPDATE Update on New Local Plan by North Herts Council's Planning Team followed by Q&A.	
7.	LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION - WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU Update and Q&A on Local Government Reorganisation. Information on the Local Government Reorganisation can be found here: Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation North Herts Council	

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|------------|--|--------------------|
| 8. | PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - GRANT APPLICATIONS
To consider community grant applications for recommendation to the Executive Member for Governance. | (Pages
11 - 22) |
| 9. | COMMUNITY UPDATE
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) |
| 10. | WARD MATTERS & OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS
To receive any verbal reports from Members and questions from members of the public regarding Ward matters and Outside Organisations. | (Pages
25 - 26) |
| | Short written updates have been published with this agenda on Churchgate, Charnwood House and Riverside Walk. | |
| 11. | FUTURE COMMUNITY FORUMS
To discuss topics for future meetings. | |

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Greenspace Consultation



What are we doing?

- A mixture of internal and external feedback exercises designed to gather data from a wide range of sources.
 - Public survey
 - public feedback sessions
 - Community forum appearances
 - Internal drop-in sessions
 - Formal submissions



Why are we doing it?

- The consultation aims to gather insights into the use, quality, and importance of key aspects of our green spaces
- The consultation will inform the next Greenspace Management Strategy and service design post-LGR

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Feedback session dates

Staff drop-ins

- 27/08 – DCO Floor 1 Room 2 (10:00-11:30)
- 01/09 - DCO Floor 1 Room 2 (14:00-15:30)

Public feedback sessions

- 18/08 – Royston, Priory Gardens (11:00-13:00)
- 18/08 – Baldock, Avenue Park (14:00-16:00)
- 25/08 – Letchworth, Howard Park (11:00-13:00)
- 25/08 – Hitchin, Bancroft Rec (14:00-16:00)



Community Forum Dates

- **10/09** – Southern Rural (Council Offices), 19:30
- **15/09** – Hitchin (Town Hall), 19:00
- **14/09** – Baldock (Baldock Community Hub), 19:30
- **23/09** – Royston (Town Hall), 19:30
- **30/09** – Letchworth (Howard Garden Social Centre), 19:30



Questions?



Scan to access survey!

REPORT (FOR RECOMMENDATION & NOTING BY COMMUNITY FORUM)

HITCHIN COMMUNITY FORUM
DATE 15 SEPTEMBER 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 Growing Resilience in Teens (GRIT) - **£1,500** towards training for Coaches.
- 2.4 Caring Herts CIC - **£1,500** towards the running of weekly Wellbeing Hub Sessions.
- 2.5 Everyone Matters - **£747** towards informal concerts in care settings.

3. BACKGROUND/ RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 The Community Grant budget for Hitchin Community Forum 2026/27 is **£21,227**.
- 3.2 Community grant payments totalling **£7,501** have been made to date, as itemised in Appendix 1.
- 3.3 The remaining budget available for community grants for the Hitchin area for 2026/27 therefore stands at **£13,726**.

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 3.3 the Community Grant budget available is **£13,726**.

- 5.2 The total amount of funding requested for this meeting is **£3,747**.

- 5.3 If the applications outlined in Appendices 2 - 4 are recommended by the Forum and subsequently approved by the Executive Member for Governance there would be **£9,979** available for Community Grants for the remainder of the 2026-2027 financial year.

- 5.4 The application outlined in Appendix 4 has been determined to be a subsidy under the Subsidy Control Act. Appendix 4 is a subsidy as there is a market for entertainment and performances in care settings. The applicant has confirmed that the value of grant 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 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 [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. Growing Resilience in Teens
- 12.3 Appendix 3. Caring Herts CIC
- 12.4 Appendix 4. Everyone Matters
- 12.5 Appendix 5. Community Updates

13. CONTACT OFFICERS

13.1 Author

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HITCHIN COMMUNITY FORUM

SUMMARY FINANCIAL POSITION 2026/27

<u>Original Budget</u> <u>2026/27</u>	<u>Carry Forward</u> <u>Budget 2025/26</u>	<u>Total Funding</u> <u>2026/27</u>	<u>Grants</u> <u>Allocated</u>	<u>Unallocated</u> <u>Budget</u>
£18,900	£2,327	£21,227	£7,501	£13,726

FUNDED PROJECTS

<u>Project</u>	<u>Forum Date</u>	<u>Grant Allocated</u>
Wilshire-Dacre Junior Academy - replacing playground equipment	2nd June 2026	£1,500
Herts Disability Sports Foundation - Bikes Without Barriers programme at Oughton Primary School	2nd June 2026	£1,500
SoW (Shout or Whisper) CIC - three 'spotlight' events for local creatives	2nd June 2026	£1,500
Hitchin British Schools Trust - summer school	2nd June 2026	£1,501
Resolve - key worker who runs group therapy and key work sessions	2nd June 2026	£1,500
TOTAL HITCHIN COMMUNITY FORUM		£7,501

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Appendix 2. Growing Resilience in Teens

=Document Control:

Version	Issue Date	Changes
1.0	NA	First Draft (BE)

Reference	CG-422			
Name of Organisation	Growing Resilience in Teens (GRIT)			
Organisation Type	Charity Incorporated Organisation			
Ward	All			
Project Type	Wellbeing for young people			
Green option considered?	N/A			
NHC Councillor involvement that may constitute a conflict of interest	Cllr Ian Albert – awarded £350 from Hertfordshire County Council Locality Budget to GRIT			
Previous financial support within six years	£17,500 from the Community Investment Fund in February 2024 towards hiring a Fundraiser			
Documentation reviewed and approved*	Safeguarding	Yes	Accounts	Yes
	Demonstrates clear governance	Yes		
Total applied for	£1,500	Total project cost	£4,591	

Officer Summary

GRIT supports young people (aged 11-24) who are experiencing mental health difficulties through their evidence-informed and effective Four Corners Method. This combines Health and Wellbeing Coaching with non-contact boxing. Their 1:1 coaching and 12-week group programmes are life-changing, helping young people manage anxiety, build confidence, regulate emotions and develop resilience. In our region, they are seeing an alarming rise in referrals. Their programmes primarily take place at their gym space in Hitchin. They supported 585 young people in 2025 and anticipate over 700 in 2026.

To respond to referrals where children have increasingly complex needs, they are requesting funding towards developing a Coach-led Mentoring Programme that sits alongside their coaching services to provide:

- (1) an early-intervention, preventative service for young people who would benefit from relational support and a constructive physical outlet, but who do not meet the threshold for structured coaching for emotional dysregulation
- (2) an important continuation of support for young people who have completed GRIT coaching
- (3) breadth within their coaching and mentoring team to respond to the increasing pressures of complex behavioural needs and more referrals
- (4) access to their gym space for more young people and flexibility to respond to demand for their programmes from adjacent neighbourhoods.

Their network of trusted referrers will be alerted to the service and clear online information provided to young people and their families who may reach out to them directly.

The funding would be going towards the below training:

- Online Health and Wellbeing Coaching by Peak Health Ltd for 1 person - £1,434.00
- Health coaching supervision by Peak Health Coaching for 1 person - £1,620.00

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

- Online Ricky Hatton Boxing Training for 3 people - £537.00
- Four Corners Method Training delivered by GRIT staff within gym space for 8 people
- £1,000.00

They have chosen the providers of the training because of a mix for value for money, the relevance of the training and because of the unique aspects of what they need.

This training is to ensure that all of their coaches who will be called upon to potentially deliver the coach led mentoring are fully trained in all aspects of their programme and coaching. So that they can continue to deliver a fully flexible service tailored to the needs of each young person.

They anticipate that 700 young people from Hitchin, Letchworth and the surrounding areas will benefit. They have also requested £1,200 from Letchworth Community Forum towards this coaching. It is less than Hitchin as it is anticipated that there will be a higher percentage of young people from Hitchin. The remaining £1,891 will come from fundraising.

Appendix 3. Caring Herts CIC

=Document Control:

Version	Issue Date	Changes
1.0	NA	First Draft (BE)

Reference	CG-602			
Name of Organisation	Caring Herts CIC			
Organisation Type	Community Interest Company			
Ward	All			
Project Type	Wellbeing for older people			
Green option considered?	N/A			
NHC Councillor involvement that may constitute a conflict of interest	None known			
Previous financial support within six years	June 2026 - £1,500 from Letchworth Community Forum towards running a Wellbeing Hub in Letchworth			
Documentation reviewed and approved*	Safeguarding	Yes	Accounts	Yes
	Demonstrates clear governance	Yes		
Total applied for	£1,500	Total project cost	£13,430	
Officer Summary				
Caring Herts CIC exists to support older members of the North Hertfordshire and Stevenage community who are experiencing loneliness or social isolation, giving them confidence to live well and enjoy life to the fullest. They currently run 15 Wellbeing Hubs every week, consisting of seated exercise and offering companionship, advice, a listening ear and, most importantly: fun. They are applying for funding towards the costs of one of their Hitchin Wellbeing Hubs that takes place every Wednesday afternoon 1:30pm – 3.30pm at St John's Community Centre. As people live longer, this brings both opportunities and challenges. Longer life can be fulfilling, but increasing evidence and practical examples from attendees informs that there are significant increases; risk of social isolation, loneliness, and declining mental wellbeing if community connections are not supported. They have previously evaluated the effectiveness of this service: • 92% of their hub attendees feel less lonely and isolated • 87% feel more mobile, balanced and steady on their feet • 77% feel more independent It costs £13,430 to run these sessions for a year and they are seeking funding towards the costs of hall hire, which is a discounted rate of £45 per week. £10,000 is raised through membership fees and £1,930 through fundraising. More than 100 residents of Hitchin will benefit, including older people who attend, their family and carers and the volunteers who support the Wellbeing Hub. In addition, they have applied to Royston Community Forum for £1,500 towards running a Wellbeing Hub in Royston. Also, £1,500 from Baldock Community Forum towards setting up a Wellbeing Hub in Baldock.				

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

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Appendix 4. Everyone Matters

=Document Control:

Version	Issue Date	Changes
1.0	NA	First Draft (BE)

Reference	CG-614			
Name of Organisation	Everyone Matters			
Organisation Type	Registered Charity			
Ward	All			
Project Type	Wellbeing for older people			
Green option considered?	N/A			
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	£747	Total project cost	£1,937	
Officer Summary				
The mission of Everyone Matters is to take live music and music-making to people of all ages who cannot readily access it themselves. They engage freelance professional musicians on a project-by-project basis, to deliver informal concerts in care homes, day centres and community settings. In Hitchin they have established relationships with local care homes and community groups through a programme of informal concerts begun in 2013. When their professional musicians are in Hitchin, to run courses at Benslow Music, they take the opportunity to rehearse and perform alongside groups of amateur musicians in events where conviviality, conversation and laughter enhance each varied programme of music. Care homes and community groups are eager to see them return and they aim to sustain links with Benslow Nursing Home, Elmside Methodist Home, Foxholes Care Home, Highbury Rise Residential Home, Milford Lodge Care Home and Symonds House Leonard Cheshire. Also to develop links with Caring Herts CIC's Hitchin Wellbeing Hub, at St John's Community Centre. To deliver six concerts, it would cost £1,937, this includes: • Fees for two professional musicians leading amateur musicians at three rehearsals at £73 per musician per rehearsal • Fees for two professional musicians leading amateurs at six concerts at £73 per musician per concert • Porterage of equipment and general administration costs This funding would go towards the professional musician's fees at concerts. The remaining amount will be covered by Benslow Music Tutor fees, organisation contribution and estimated contributions from the care settings they perform in.				

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

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Districtwide Community Updates
• The Community Partnerships Team have launched the Communities Hub, an online resource for community groups, residents and partners across North Herts. Alongside information on grants, council events and local organisations, the Hub aims to connect communities, support engagement, and provide opportunities for residents and groups to raise local issues. • Co-ordinating various local and district wide Network Groups including Youth Action, Food Provision, Arts and Culture, Green and Growing and the Community Centres Network Group. • Members of the team attended the North Herts and Stevenage CVS's 'Be the Good' volunteering summit. • 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 which includes: • Meeting the new Westmill Community Centre Manager • Meeting with the Department for Work and Pensions With the launch of the new Communities Hub page, information has been added relating to Hitchin, including information about how grant funding has impacted the community. Grants Communities - this link shows photos from the Hitchin running club, Bubble Works, who received funding in 2025 towards making activities accessible for members. 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 project team presented a report to Full Council in July, to gain approval to launch a two-phase Procurement process - starting in mid-September 2026. The Procurement will look to appoint a partner to work on the next, required feasibility stage that will give the Council greater detail on what is possible on the Churchgate site from a developer perspective and according to the specification set out by the Council. The Procurement is an open tender, and invites interested parties to bid for the feasibility work which makes up Stage 1 of the process. This is a really exciting time for the Churchgate Project Board, as it demonstrates significant progress in the project and we look forward to working with a selected partner to draft a plan for the site.

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 and completing recently on a number of innovative short term community uses of vacant units. The centre is currently close to full occupancy. Praxis also continue to work collaboratively with Visit Hitchin regarding events over the coming months that we can work on together.

Riverside Walk – Riverside Walk, Hitchin

This remains a priority of the Council to deliver opening up the walkway between Bridge Street and Biggin Lane to increase footfall in this part of the town centre.

A consultant engineer has been advising on the specification and design of the walkway, including the installation of a new footbridge. A topographical survey and trial pits have been undertaken out to identify the appropriate location of the bridge. Consultation has taken place with the Environment Agency, nearby residents, the planning department and Hertfordshire County Council as highways authority, which has informed the production of a potential design for the walkway.

The next steps will be to finalise the design of the walkway, together with supporting documentation so that formal applications can be made for the regulatory and other consents required for the project (planning consent, Environment Agency/Lead Local Flood Agency consent and Highways Agency consent). It is envisaged that these consents will be submitted simultaneously this autumn.

The Council will identify an appropriate contractor to complete the manufacture and installation of the new bridge (and refurbishment of an existing bridge) and new connection to the highway at Biggin Lane, refurbishing the railings and associated works. Pending the grant of permissions authorising the walkway, the works are planned to take place in Spring/Summer next year.

Charnwood House

The new marketing of Charnwood House went live on Monday 24th August as part of the Council's plan for the property to be brought back into use to support community-based activities and there has been early interest in the opportunity. The details can be found at <https://www.eddisons.com/property-search/charnwood-house-paynes-park-hitchin-hertfordshire-sg5>

The particulars and application form 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 includes works required to the property, lease length and acceptable uses.