

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL



2 September 2026

Our Ref Southern Rural Community Forum
10 September 2026
Contact. Community Partnerships Team
Direct Dial. 01462 474405
Email. 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, 10TH SEPTEMBER, 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

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.	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.	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	
5.	NEW LOCAL PLAN UPDATE Update on New Local Plan by North Herts Council's Planning Team followed by Q&A.	
6.	PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - GRANT APPLICATIONS To consider community grant applications for recommendation to the Executive Member for Governance.	(Pages 11 - 22)
7.	COMMUNITY UPDATE To provide the Forum with an update to ensure Members are kept informed of the work of the Community Partnerships Team.	(Pages 23 - 24)

8. WARD MATTERS & OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

To receive any verbal reports from Members and questions from members of the public regarding Ward matters and Outside Organisations.

9. FUTURE COMMUNITY FORUMS

To discuss topics for future meetings.

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Greenspace Consultation



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Agenda Item 3

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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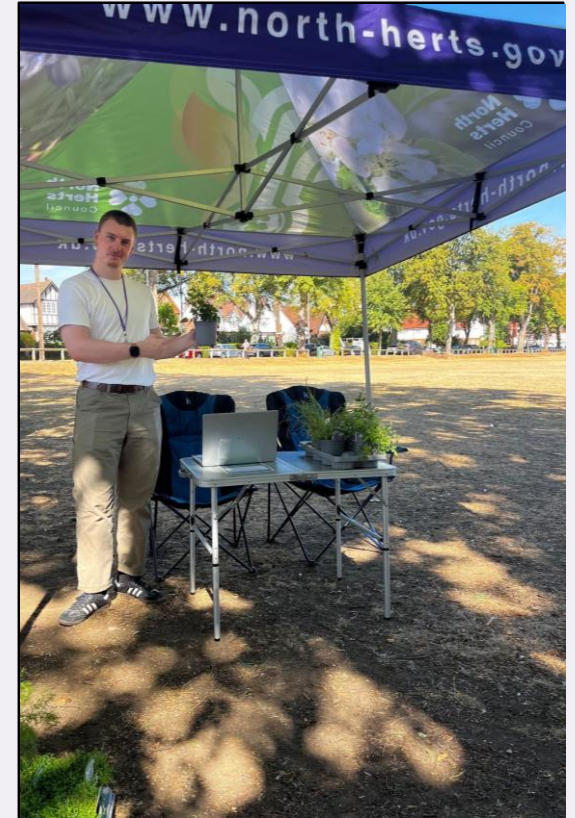
Feedback session dates

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)

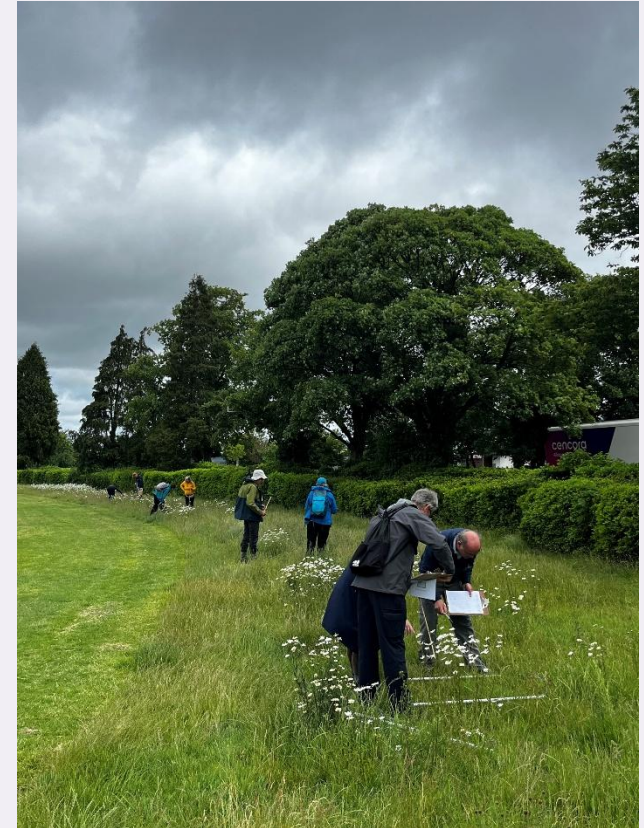
Public feedback sessions

- 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)

SOUTHERN RURAL COMMUNITY FORUM
DATE 10 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 Graveley Village Hall - **£3,000** towards installing an air-conditioning unit in the village hall.
- 2.4 Kings Walden Parish Council - **£650** towards the removal of an existing tree and planting a permanent Christmas tree for future village events.
- 2.5 Lilley Parish Council - **£650** towards planting a permanent Christmas tree for future village events.

3. BACKGROUND/ RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 The Community Grant budget for Southern Rural Community Forum 2026/27 is **£17,310**.
- 3.2 Community grant payments totalling **£3,858** 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 2026/27 therefore stands at **£13,452**.

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 3.3 the Community Grant budget available is **£13,452**.
- 5.2 The total amount of funding requested for this meeting is **£4,300**.
- 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 **£9,152** available for Community Grants for the remainder of the 2026-2027 financial year.
- 5.4 The application outlined in Appendix 2 has been determined to be a subsidy under the Subsidy Control Act. Appendix 2 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 environmental implications associated with Appendix 2, allowing the site to adapt to the impacts of rising temperatures and the increasingly frequent heatwaves associated with climate change. This will ensure the building remains usable, safe and comfortable for community activities. In addition, it reduces the need for users to travel elsewhere to access similar services and activities. Though the installation of an air conditioning unit represents slightly increased energy usage, this is outweighed by the adaptation benefits outlined. To maximise the benefit of this air conditioned space, we will explore putting the site on Hertfordshire County Council's register of free cool spaces that any local resident can access.
- 9.2 Appendices 3 and 4 both have positive environmental impacts through the planting of permanent trees that will provide long-term ecological and community benefits, instead of purchasing a new cut tree each year. Whilst Appendix 3 involves the removal of an existing tree, this will be replaced with a new permanent tree that will continue to enhance the local environment and biodiversity over the long term.

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. Graveley Village Hall
- 12.3 Appendix 3. Kings Walden Parish Council
- 12.4 Appendix 4. Lilley Parish Council
- 12.5 Appendix 5. Community Updates

13. CONTACT OFFICERS

13.1 Author

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13.2 Contributors

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SOUTHERN RURAL COMMUNITY FORUM**SUMMARY FINANCIAL POSITION 2026/27**

<u>Original Budget</u> <u>2026/27</u>	<u>Carry Forward Budget</u> <u>2025/26</u>	<u>Total Funding 2026/27</u>	<u>Grants</u> <u>Allocated</u>	<u>Unallocated</u> <u>Budget</u>
£15,000	£2,310	£17,310	£3,858	£13,452

FUNDED PROJECTS

<u>Project</u>	<u>Forum Date</u>	<u>Grant Allocated</u>
Pirton School - purchase of scooter and bike racks for the school	11th June 2026	£858
Preston Village Hall - purchase of a projector and screen	11th June 2026	£1,500
Resolve - key worker who runs group therapy and key work sessions	11th June 2026	£1,500
TOTAL SOUTHERN RURAL COMMUNITY FORUM		£3,858

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Appendix 2. Graveley Village Hall

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Version	Issue Date	Changes
1.0	NA	First Draft (BE)

Reference	CG-590			
Name of Organisation	Graveley Village Hall			
Organisation Type	Registered charity			
Ward	Graveley, St Ippolyts & Wymondley			
Project Type	Installation of air conditioning unit			
Green option considered?	The project supports environmental sustainability by helping the village hall adapt to warmer temperatures and remain a viable, well-used community facility in the face of climate change. In addition, it reduces the need for users to travel elsewhere to access similar services and activities. Though the installation of an air conditioning unit represents slightly increased energy usage, this is outweighed by the adaptation benefits outlined.			
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	£3,000	Total project cost	£5,000	
Officer Summary				
Graveley Village Hall is a well-used community facility serving the residents of Graveley Village and the surrounding area. The hall provides an important local venue for a range of community activities and is also used by a local pre-school. As a central community asset, it supports social interaction, physical activity, and wellbeing for people of all ages. The village hall is seeking support to purchase and install an air conditioning unit. In recent years, higher temperatures have made the hall increasingly uncomfortable during warmer periods, affecting its ability to accommodate users safely and effectively. The heat is currently preventing or restricting use of the hall by the pre-school, as well as other regular user groups such as yoga classes, table tennis sessions, and dance groups. The installation will create a more comfortable environment, enabling these activities to continue throughout the year and helping to ensure the hall remains accessible and welcoming for all users. The project will benefit a wide range of people, including children attending the pre-school, participants in regular classes and activities, community groups, hall hirers, and members of the general public, most of whom are residents of Graveley. It also supports the Council's Sustainability priority by helping the hall adapt to the impacts of a changing and warming climate, ensuring that this community facility can continue to serve local residents into the future. The total cost to purchase and install the air conditioning unit is £5,000, with £2,000 being contributed by the organisation. Graveley Village Hall is requesting a grant of £3,000 from the Southern Rural Community Forum towards the project.				

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

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=Document Control:

Version	Issue Date	Changes
1.0	NA	First Draft (BE)

Reference	CG-597			
Name of Organisation	Kings Walden Parish Council			
Organisation Type	Parish Council			
Ward	Hitchwood			
Project Type	Winter event			
Green option considered?	The project has a positive environmental impact through the planting of a permanent tree that will provide long-term biodiversity benefits, helping to offset the loss of the existing tree.			
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	£650	Total project cost	£1,150	
Officer Summary				

[Kings Walden Parish Council](#) (KWPC) represents residents across the parish and works to support community wellbeing, local facilities, and initiatives that benefit the wider community.

KWPC is seeking funding towards the purchase and planting of a permanent Christmas tree outside Breachwood Green Village Hall, and for the removal of an existing tree that is causing concerns due to its size and impact on the surrounding area.

Breachwood Green Village Hall and Recreation Ground is a key community hub within the parish, regularly used by local families, community groups, and hall hirers from both within and outside the area. The site is home to play facilities and hosts a range of events throughout the year.

The Parish Council, alongside St Mary's Church, organises an annual Christmas tractor drive and Christmas market centred around Breachwood Green Village Hall. A permanent Christmas tree at the hall would provide a focal point for festive events, including a light switch-on, carol singing and a visit from Santa, while creating opportunities for local schools and residents to participate in fundraising and community activities. The project aims to strengthen community spirit and provide a more sustainable alternative to purchasing a temporary Christmas tree each year.

The total project cost is £1,150, including £450 for the tree, £400 for planting by a contractor, and £300 for the removal of an existing tree. KWPC will contribute £500 from its reserves and is seeking £650 from the Southern Rural Forum towards the project. Future maintenance costs have been considered by the Parish Council.

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Appendix 4. Lilley Parish Council

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Version	Issue Date	Changes
1.0	NA	First Draft (BE)

Reference	CG-608			
Name of Organisation	Lilley Parish Council			
Organisation Type	Parish Council			
Ward	Offa			
Project Type	Winter event			
Green option considered?	The project supports sustainability by replacing the annual purchase of a cut Christmas tree with a permanent living tree that will benefit the village for years to come.			
NHC Councillor involvement that may constitute a conflict of interest	None known.			
Previous financial support within six years	Received £500 from Southern Rural Community Forum towards replacement of a noticeboard in June 2021.			
Documentation reviewed and approved*	Safeguarding	Yes	Accounts	Yes
	Demonstrates clear governance	Yes		
Total applied for	£650	Total project cost	£850	

Officer Summary

[Lilley Parish Council](#) represents residents across the parish and works to support local facilities, community wellbeing, and projects that benefit the wider community.

Lilley Parish Council are seeking funding towards the purchase and planting of a permanent Christmas tree on Lilley Village Green. The proposed location is a central focal point within the village, close to the village pub, where the community already gathers annually for a Christmas tree light switch-on event, carol singing, and a visit from Santa. At present, the Parish Council purchases a new Christmas tree each year for these celebrations, resulting in ongoing costs and a less sustainable approach.

The proposed permanent tree will provide a long-term central point for the village's Christmas celebrations, enhancing a popular community event that brings residents together and strengthens community spirit. It will offer a sustainable alternative to purchasing a new tree each year, creating a lasting community asset that can be enjoyed and decorated annually.

The total project cost is £850, including £450 for the tree and £400 for planting by a contractor. The Parish Council will contribute £200 from its reserves and is seeking £650 from the Southern Rural Forum towards the project. Future maintenance costs have been considered by the Parish Council.

*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. • 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: • Attended a Hertfordshire Health Walks in Kimpton • Meeting with the Department for Work and Pensions • Attended the North Herts and Stevenage CVS's 'Be the Good' volunteering summit. With the launch of the new Communities Hub page, information has been added relating to the Southern Rural Community Forum, including information about how grant funding has impacted the community. Grants Communities - this link shows photos from Preston School Association, who received funding in 2025 towards replacing the school's trim trail, and Pirton Sports & Social Club, who also received funding in 2025 towards purchasing chairs and a chair trolley to increase opportunities for outdoor events and activities. 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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