

**North Herts Council
ROYSTON AREA FORUM**

**Meeting held at Royston Town Hall, Melbourn Street, Royston, SG8 7DA
On Wednesday, 6th September 2023 at 7.30pm**

NOTES

Present: Councillor Ruth Brown (RB) (Chair), Councillor Chris Hinchliff (CH) (Vice-Chair), Councillor Matt Barnes (MB), Councillor Cathy Brownjohn (CB), Councillor Bryony May (BM).

In Attendance:

Becca Edwards (BE) (Community and Partnerships Officer) and Cllr Amy Allen (AA) (Executive Member for Recycling and Waste Management)

Also present:

At the commencement of the meeting there were 19 members of the public, including registered speakers.

Meeting started at **7.30pm**

1. Apologies for absence

Cllr Gerald Morris.

2. Chair's Announcements

Cllr Brown welcomed everyone in attendance.

- Highlighted that the Forum is an informal, inclusive meeting to share ideas.
- Members were reminded they are making recommendations and not decisions for grant applications.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Gerald Morris.

3. Public Participation

Becca Edwards, the Community and Partnership Officer, updated Members of community grant budgets.

Cllr May declared an interest as her husband is Chair of the organisation. Cllr May left the room.

Received presentations in support of grant applications by the following:

Nigel Reader (NR) presented the Therfield, Reed and Kelshall Sports Association (TRAKSA) application

Members and members of the public enquired and received satisfactory answers about:

- The percentage of water needs that would be met by the rainwater harvesting.
- The size of the rainwater harvesting receptacle.

MoP asked about what safeguarding is in place to make sure any monies granted by the Council is spent on what has been applied for.

BE explained that they are measures in place, including checking receipts and visiting sites/projects where necessary.

TRAKSA vote

RB proposed.

CH seconded.

Unanimous vote in favour of recommending TRAKSA's application for £1,500 towards rainwater harvesting equipment and car park resurfacing.

Cllr May returned to the room.

4. Information Note: Grants & Community Update

Becca Edwards, Community and Partnerships Officer, presented the Community Update.

In addition to the Community Update, BE noted that the Community and Partnerships Team is working on the North Herts Heroes awards which are likely to be launched in November.

5. Presentations

5.1 Cllr Amy Allen, executive Member for recycling and Waste Management at North Herts Council, gave a presentation about recycling and waste.

The portfolio includes curbside collection, highway cleansing, flytipping, some public toilets and much more.

In 2019, North Herts Council declared a Climate Emergency. The next waste contract starts in 2025, we're shaping the services that we provide to what residents need rather than want.

The services that will be changing come 2025 will be those that people need. We did a survey last year, 80% of people who responded didn't have a full bin come collection day. Less waste going into the purple bins, means less collections. Collections will be three weekly. Some people may get a bespoke service regarding bins if they have the need. Flats will remain at two weekly.

Soft plastics are being moved to being collected – maybe alongside the bin.

Confident it's going to be successful – finding that when samples of purple bins are done a lot of things could go into other bins.

It's evident that food waste is one of the biggest issues putting greenhouse gases and carbon emissions into the atmosphere. If we did more to curb food waste, it would be better than recycling every single item possible.

Herts County Council are running a [Food Worth Saving campaign](#) – focussing on looking at what you buy, use and waste. Buy less, use less, waste less.

RB invited questions.

MoP noted that three weekly collections isn't easy to remember, and asked how NHC will help residents remember.

Discussion was had around apps and calendars. It was pointed out that an app might not be the best idea for elderly residents. A printed calendar would be quite tricky as collections depend on postcodes, whether in a flat and many more things.

MoP2 explained that he had various issues regarding bins. Had requested a purple bin but was delivered a grey bin. Some large bins were removed from the flats without warning. These issues have been reported but not responded to. Doesn't find the councils reporting systems easy to use.

AA requested that MoP2 speak to her at the end of the meeting to share specific details for her to investigate.

MoP2 shared their opinion that flats have one colour bin, but houses have a different colour bin for the same type of refuse.

AA told the audience that new bins will be grey with various coloured lids that relate to the type of waste. Can't replace all bins at once due to cost and waste, but new ones are starting to come out.

MoP3 stated that they have their bins cleaned by an external company who give them a calendar and colour code it for cleaning. Might be something worth looking into.

County Councillor Fiona Hill (FH), a member of the audience, raised her concerns about three weekly collections of purple bins. If a collection is missed then it would be six weeks between collections.

AA if there's a need then the service could be made bespoke and kept at two weekly. Missed collections would need to be reported as they are at present.

MoP4 noted that they are a voluntary litter picker with Royston Environmental Group and explained that any litter he collects is placed in how general wheelie bin. Enquired if there is a record anywhere of how much litter is gathered.

AA stated that there isn't a record that she is aware of. Offered thanks to MoP4 and Royston Environmental Group. Asked if MoP4 uses the [Adopt an Area](#) scheme.

MoP4 confirmed uses Adopt an Area.

MoP5 queried what the criteria is to have garden waste collected. Noted that they have a sticker to indicate their bin needs collected. What checks are made to ensure only those who have paid is collected? Only observed someone checking on an iPad once.

AA explained that operatives have a system in their cab which indicates which households are signed up to garden waste collection. They do not need to check stickers.

MoP4 asked if AA/the Council are confident that the waste operatives are collecting as per the contract.

MoP5 added that people have stated they don't pay for garden waste collection, but it's collected anyway.

AA stated that she is confident that the contract is being followed and that it may be possible for things to slip through the net on occasion. If someone believes this to be the case, they should report to the Council.

MoP4 enquired why a property's brown bin isn't taken away if they don't sign up for collection.

AA explained that a bin is someone's personal property and for it to be taken away would be theft. However, if you have more bins than permitted these can be removed.

MoP6 shared his thoughts on how kitchen waste bins are treated. It would be useful if waste operatives didn't throw them when they have been emptied. Leads to damage.

AA stated that this has been reported to Urbaser multiple times, and damaged caddies are replaced free of charge.

MoP7 brought up an issue about confusion around addresses using the recycling centre.

FH explained that more people from Cambs had been using the Royston recycling centre than from Royston., so things changed. The operatives weren't supposed to be too strict on the addresses and this is now being addressed.

MoP7 noted that the recycling centre used to have an area where items that were still useable were left for others to take. This is no longer the case.

FH explained that there are reuse shops across the County that items are taken to. A lot of things changed after Covid due to safety reasons.

MoP8 TRAKSA is classed as commercial. Why isn't there a facility for small businesses to have recycling collected?

AA stated that this isn't something that currently happens, but a scaled down version of trade waste for small businesses could be looked into.

MoP9 enquired if blister packs can be recycled.

AA explained that if blister packs are completely aluminium, they can go in recycling. If not, then they have to go in waste. Superdrug may/may not be collecting. In supermarkets there are Terracycle collection points – shaved razors, bottle tops on hand soap etc, soft plastics and in some cases blister packs. Lots of these schemes are run by schools or charities and they raise money.

MoP7 shared that a member of Royston Environmental Group has some Teracycle on Stile Plantation. *More information can be found [here](#).*

AA noted that soft plastics will be collected in the usual recycling as of spring 2025.

RB suggested that more communication happens regarding this.

MoP2 brought the discussion back to the Royston recycling centre, noting that you cannot attend the recycling centre on foot without phoning up in advance to make an appointment.

FH explained that this is due to health and safety.

MoP2 suggested that there could be a doorbell at the entrance of the centre to contact staff.

MoP10 enquired why textiles can no longer be recycled alongside the grey bins.

AA explained that the contract for textile collections ended in July. A consultation was held and most people who responded said that they used textile banks. The take up of the service wasn't massive anyway so it wasn't reinstated. Also researched the textile banks across the district to ensure they could meet the known demand. Also, most charity shops have a rags collection, but please ensure that rags are labelled and separated from any donations to sell.

Questions were raised later in the meeting about street cleaning.

MoP11 enquired what happens if street cleaning is scheduled but cars are parked where the street cleaning would take place. The instance referred to is a road where commuters park during the day.

AA explained that cars cannot be moved so the crew would return the following day, but unfortunately if it's still not possible then there's nothing that can be done.

MoP11 noted that residents sweep the streets themselves when the commuters have left/

AA asked to speak to the MOP at the end of the meeting for specific details.

MoP enquired if street cleaning includes any kind of gardening – weeds/leaves etc. Drains specifically.

FH shared that if there is an area that has heavy leaf fall then they are focussed on, more than that is reported more knowledge they have.

AA specific drains can be reported on [Fix My Street](#).

MoP explained that he's happy to clean himself but doesn't want crews to come round and think there aren't problems.

5.2 Cllr Ruth Brown opened the Cost of Living discussion and shared information about the following:

- [Council Tax Reduction Scheme](#) – this has changed this year to help support those most in need.
- Healthy Hub

More information is available on our website: www.north-herts.gov.uk/squeeze

Cath Bennett, Community Engagement Manager at Citizens Advice North Herts (CANH), gave a presentation about services available to help with the Cost of Living.

CANH are [currently open](#): Royston Monday & Wednesday 9.30am-12noon; Letchworth Monday-Thursday 9.30am-4pm; Hitchin Tuesday 9.30am-12noon; Baldock Library, Wednesday 10.30am-12noon. Pre-booked appts preferred.

Last year, CANH helped 6,000 people across North Herts. However, due to the cost of living more people than ever are struggling. The team are trying to get out into the community and running workshops, focussing on maximising income, meal planning etc.

If a household's income is less than £40,000 they are likely to get something, so it's worth using a budget calculator to find out if you are able to apply for any benefits.

Scams are a massive issue at present, CANH are running workshops about these.

Some of the easiest things to do is to check subscriptions - that you're not on auto renew, cut out unnecessary expenditure. If you're on Direct Debit with energy suppliers, you can have the amount changed so they don't have your money. There are social tariffs for broadband.

MoP2 enquired if CANH have any information about best before food, yellow stickers etc.

CB informed the audience that they share information about things like that. There are also some good apps about, including [Too Good To Go](#) and [Olio](#).

AA noted that she runs the Wilbury Community Café once a month in Letchworth. Best before food is there for the taking, there's also second hand uniform and lots of other bits and pieces.

6. Open Discussion

Cllr Ruth Brown shared information about the [Solar Together Scheme](#).

MoP enquired what the plan for the toilets at the bus station.

RB explained that the building is likely to be leased out. There has been some interest but nothing concrete.

7. Future Area Forums

Cllr Ruth Brown explained that the meetings on January 10th and March 6th would be virtual.

Discussion was had around the virtual nature of the meetings. It was not preferred by some, but understood that as this is a trial year for the forums this is something that was being explored.

Information about future area forums will be shared on social media and posters go up around town. If you would like to be informed specifically about the aarea forums, please email becca.edwards@north-herts.gov.uk.

Suggested themes/topics to be discussed included:

- What the Council are doing to support the high street
- Cycle networks
- Community safety

Meeting closed 9.12pm.